



# Master Citizen Planner Component Descriptions

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

*The following pages describe the various components required to earn the Master Citizen Planner (MCP) credential. Please detach and keep for your own reference.*

## Capstone Project

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### Goal

The primary goal of the capstone project is for Citizen Planner Program participants to apply their learning to benefit their community. This is the “transformational education” component of the program. The capstone project will be required for those wishing to earn the Master Citizen Planner (MCP) credential.

### Objectives

- To increase learning among participants through a “real life” situation where technical information learned in the classroom is applied.
- To benefit the community by having officials/residents promote and implement sound land use decision-making.
- To create measurable impacts and outcomes of the Citizen Planner Program in the community.

### Commitment

The capstone project should generally be an activity that is related to the course material and benefits the city, village, township, or county in which the participant resides in some tangible way.

- A commitment of six to ten hours is recommended for each capstone project (including preparation, presentation, and follow-up).
- Every capstone project would include a written outcome/impact statement.
- Participants would have sixty days from the completion of the last core session to complete the project. However, participants are encouraged to finish their project prior to completion of the program.
- Only participants seeking the MCP credential would be required to complete the capstone project.

## Capstone Project Ideas

Since Citizen Planner participants have different roles and experiences in land use planning and zoning in their community, a menu of options is needed for Citizen Planner participants. Any participant would be able to do any project on the list, no matter their status as an elected or appointed official.

### Suggested Menu:

1. Identify the most relevant Smart Growth Tenets for your community. Review the local unit of government’s Master Plan or Zoning Ordinance. Document (written report or PowerPoint presentation or both) how the plan/ordinance supports or does not support the relevant tenets. Make

recommendations as to how the community could better support the relevant Smart Growth Tenets. Share your findings with the local unit of government by:

- Doing a presentation to the Planning Commission – ideal
  - Meeting with a staff person, planner, manager, planning commission chairperson, supervisor or mayor to share findings
  - You must also share your findings with the local MSU Extension office and document the date of your presentation and or meeting.
- Estimated project duration: 6 – 8 hours

2. Evaluate the consistency/inconsistency between the community's master plan and zoning ordinance. Participants could pick one or several themes presented in the citizen Planner material to focus on (i.e. open space conservation, rural character, downtown development, traditional neighborhood design, etc.). Share your findings with the local unit of government by:

- Doing a presentation to the Planning Commission – ideal
  - Meeting with a staff person, planner, manager, planning commission chairperson, supervisor or mayor to share findings
  - You must also share your findings with the local MSU Extension office and document the date of your presentation and or meeting.
- Estimated project duration: 6 – 8 hours

3. Volunteer (or be appointed) to a committee to conduct a special study or complete a plan (e.g. open space plan, recreation plan, transportation study, housing needs assessment, non-motorized trail system, etc.). The project must be approved by the local MSU Extension office. This requires a commitment beyond regular planning commission/ZBA meetings or elected official meetings. A written summary of the project and projected outcome would be required.  
Total project duration should be no less than 6 hours.

4. Conduct a community-wide survey on a land use issue.  
Estimated project duration: 10-20 hours

5. Make a presentation to the Planning Commission, ZBA, Elected Officials, or other official body concerning key concepts you learned during the class and how they might be applied in your community. A written summary of the project and projected outcome would be required.  
Total project duration should be no less than 6 hours.

6. Become appointed as a planning commissioner or ZBA member in your community (within two months of last core module session; for first-time appointees only). Participants would be required to provide a written summary of how they plan to use the information they learned.

7. Volunteer to work with youth in classroom and/or 4-H Club settings through the Junior Citizen Planner Program for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Easy to use curriculum materials are available. An MSU Extension staff person will assist you in planning your lesson(s) and connecting you with a 4-H Club and/or classroom. Present at least a one-hour lesson to a class or 4-H club. Each presentation will require preparation prior to the presentation (approx. one-two hours), the presentation (at least one hour), written report with observations (one hour). Estimated project duration-six hours
8. One optional project will be developed by each Citizen Planner Program local Advisory Team for a team of participants to work on. Advisory Teams could invite local units and land organizations to submit project ideas in advance of the Team meeting, where a project is selected. Estimated project duration: 10 – 20 hours.

## **Impact Statement**

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The primary goal of the Impact Statement is for participants to communicate to Citizen Planner what kinds of benefits and impacts their Capstone Project has had on the community. This is the summary of the “transformational education” component of the program. The Impact Statement is required for those seeking to earn the Master Citizen Planner (MCP) credential

## **Competency Examination**

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Upon completion of the 7 core sessions and submission of the MCP application to Citizen Planner, you will be provided access (via email) to the MSU Angel website ([www.angel.msu.edu](http://www.angel.msu.edu)) to complete an online exam. You will have 60 days from the approval of this application to successfully complete the exam with a score of 70% or higher. Upon successful completion of your exam, please print your final score and submit it to **Citizen Planner** when you send your Capstone Project and Impact Statement.