

# MASONRY ORDINANCE CASE STUDY

## CANTON, MICHIGAN

In response to rapid development and an increase in population, the township of Canton, Michigan takes a proactive approach to manage its growth. Located in Wayne County, Canton is home to over 80,000 people who study and work in the neighboring cities of Ann Arbor and Detroit.

### Executive Summary

Canton, Michigan's rapid growth challenged the Township Board of Trustees to develop a planning strategy that would accommodate new development while maintaining the aesthetics and character of the community. Through the use of a brick ordinance, Canton has poised itself for quality growth without sacrificing the identity of the community.

### Just The Facts

- City: Canton, Michigan
- Population: 83,269
- Area: 36 Square Miles
- Type of Government: Charter Township
- Masonry Requirement: Commercial: 50%  
Residential: 50%  
Office Development: 75%
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At the onset of this rapid growth, Canton sought to maintain its identity and sense of place while remaining an attractive location for commercial and residential development. Township Trustees approached this opportunity by mandating that brick materials be used in all new development throughout the community.

In 1990, an ordinance was passed requiring the use of brick on all commercial and residential development. Specifically, the

ordinance requires that a minimum of 50% brick be used on residential and commercial buildings, and 75% brick be used on all new office development.

According to Canton Planning Director Jeff Goulet, enacting the masonry ordinance was a matter of necessity. "We had an enormous number of houses built here in the 1970s and a huge influx of development." Goulet added that the ordinance provides the town with a solid planning foundation. "As we build out, we just want a higher standard."

Canton has used its brick ordinance to address national retailers, indicating that large multinational corporations and "chain stores" will partner with communities to achieve design goals. Blockbuster Video is a prime example. Responding to the masonry ordinance, Blockbuster agreed to build its store, which is the main anchor of a local strip mall, with a combination of red and buff colored brick. It also adhered to the architectural guidelines in the overlay district by including brick columns, pitched roof lines, and landscaping.

The incentives to build with brick have contributed to the growth in Canton's residential development over the past decade, despite fears the added expense might scare off newcomers. "Since the ordinance, we build a thousand houses every year," Goulet said. "In fact, the higher level of design has resulted in more new arrivals, because [new residents] know what to expect."

Canton's masonry ordinance also covers the town's Corporate Park Overlay District. The ordinance dictates the use of masonry and stone for specific commercial business such as outdoor storage for garden centers, junkyards, warehouses, and auto repair shops. The ordinance instructs that these storage areas be enclosed by a masonry wall and brick support columns, in order to maintain a neat appearance by screening equipment and materials.

After 15 years, the success of Canton's brick ordinance is obvious. Goulet feels that Canton's masonry ordinance has provided the area a competitive advantage over surrounding towns, and given the township an image of "substance and significance" that will help fuel growth for years to come.

