

October 23, 2006

Commissioner Sue Ann Douglas, Chairperson
Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee
1200 North Telegraph Road
Pontiac, MI 48341

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 06-07, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the draft Village of Holly Master Plan, Draft for Public Comment, August 14, 2006

Dear Chairperson Douglas and Committee Members:

The Village of Holly Planning Commission has prepared a new master plan to replace its 1997 plan. The following is a review and analysis of the draft plan. The Plan includes text, charts, and maps that describe the existing and desired future development of the community.

Under the amendments to the Municipal Planning Act, which took effect January 9, 2003, the Village of Holly is required to send a copy of the draft plan to Oakland County and neighboring communities for comment prior to adoption. Oakland County has between 75 and 95 days to submit comments on the draft plan. The November 14, 2006 Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee (CZC) meeting falls within our 95-day comment period. Neighboring communities have 65 days to submit comments directly to Holly and are required to send a copy of any comments to the county as well. Once the County's 95-day comment period has expired, the Planning Commission can hold a public hearing and take final action to adopt the plan.

According to the Village's Planning Consultant, Holly and Rose Townships, Consumers Energy, DTE Energy, Ameritech, AT&T, US Sprint, McLeod USA, Comcast Cablevision, Canadian National, and CSX Transportation were sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these communities and utilities have received notice of the CZC meeting; however the letter to CSX Transportation was sent back as undeliverable. Comments have been received from Holly Township and are attached.

Public Participation Process

A Visioning Session was held on December 1, 2004 to solicit input from residents. Participants were asked to identify assets and challenges in the Village. The downtown and small town character were expressed by several participants as the biggest assets. Questions were posed to residents about the downtown and the Midtown/Saginaw Street corridor. Input from this session as well as from other Planning Commission meetings was used to develop the goals and objectives section of the plan.

Plan Contents

The Plan is divided into the following six chapters: Introduction; Community Profile; Data Analysis; Goals, Objectives and Actions; Land Use Plan; and Implementation. The results of the Visioning Session are included in the Appendix.

Holly is a small, historic village in the northwestern corner of Oakland County. The Village had a population of 6,179 in 2000. This is a 10% increase from the 1990 population of 5,595. By 2030, the population is expected to increase to 6,790 according to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).

Since 1990, there have been positive changes in the income and educational attainment of residents. *“Census data show the proportion of people with four-year college or advanced degrees has increased dramatically between 1990 and 2000, while the number of persons with less than a high school education has declined.”* (Page 8) Correspondingly, there has been a reduction in the number of persons and households living in poverty.

The 2002 Land Use Inventory, prepared by Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services, was used to identify current land use in the Village. Over 33% of the total acreage is used for single family residential. Vacant is the next highest land use at 12% of the total. Tied for third place are Water and Rights-of-Way, with each accounting for about 11% of land total.

Over 5% of the Village is in Commercial use. There are three distinct commercial districts within the Village. The historic downtown is located along Saginaw, north and south of Maple, and contains a variety of small specialty shops. The downtown and the residential area to the east along Maple are within the Village’s two historic districts. The districts contain over 100 properties and are included on the National Register of Historic Places.

North of the downtown along Saginaw Street is the second commercial area. This “Midtown” area is a mixture of retail, office, industrial, and residential uses. At Saginaw/North Holly and Grange Hall Roads in the northern part of the Village is the largest commercial district. Shopping centers and other small businesses that provide basic-needs like groceries, gas, and pharmaceuticals are found here. Due to the rural nature of the surrounding townships, the Village of Holly serves as a commercial center for residents in this part of Oakland County.

Industrial land use accounts for almost 5% of the land total. While industrial uses can be found in several locations throughout the Village, the largest concentration of industrial land is adjacent to the railroad tracks on the north and south sides of Grange Hall Road. Some of the land on the south side of Grange Hall Road may be available for industrial expansion.

Given the amount of vacant land still remaining in the Village (over 200 acres), a Buildout Analysis was prepared, and the results are included in the plan. Vacant land was analyzed to determine the maximum amount of development that could be generated if the vacant parcels were developed according to their current zoning. The Buildout Analysis revealed that 537 new single family homes, 187 new multi-family and attached single family units, and 3 manufactured homes could be built. In addition, almost 38 acres of commercial and about 7 acres of industrial land are vacant.

Water is a prominent feature within the Village; there are several large lakes, many of which have parkland associated with them. The Shiawassee River also flows through the southwestern corner of the Village. In addition, the Seven Lakes State Park and Holly State Recreation Area

are located just outside the Village. These natural resources are viewed as assets on which the Village should capitalize. The plan also includes the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) Natural Areas map. The MNFI data was prepared under contract to Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services, and shows potentially significant natural areas that are combinations of wetlands, woodlands, grass lands, uplands, flood plains, steep slopes, or stream corridors. Several of the MNFI sites in the Village link to large, high quality sites in the surrounding townships.

The master plan contains a comprehensive listing of goals, objectives, and actions. Goals were developed for residential, parks and recreation, commercial, industrial, and transportation. Each of the objectives and actions is further detailed in the Implementation chapter. The party responsible for implementing the action is identified along with a priority rating (high, medium, or low) that reflects when it will be implemented within the next five years. Brief comments are given on costs for each action that indicate if the cost will be low or high, although actual dollar amounts are not given. While the Planning Commission is the responsible party for many of the actions, the Department of Public Works, the Parks Commission, Village Council, Village Manager, Planner, and Downtown Development Authority have responsibilities as well.

Future Land Use Map

The visual representation of the Village's policies is shown on the Future Land Use map (attached). The largest planned land use is single family residential. Only one classification of single family residential is shown on the map, Low Density Residential, which allows for 3-5 dwelling units per acre. Most of the areas planned for Low Density Residential are located south of Grange Hall Road.

Areas planned for Moderate Density Residential permit up to 7 dwelling units per acre and allow for attached condominiums, townhouses, and apartments. This classification includes the two existing mobile home parks in the northeastern corner of the Village and the senior housing complex on the north side of Grange Hall Road at the western edge of the Village. Most of the areas planned for Moderate Density Residential are located north of Grange Hall Road. The only area of Moderate Density planned in the southern half of the Village is located along Elm Street, east of Saginaw. This area currently consists of existing industrial uses. *"It is crucial that expansion of industrial areas into residential areas be prohibited and that industrial uses that are currently in inappropriate areas be relocated."* (Page 53)

The main north-south route in the Village is Saginaw Street, which changes its name to North Holly Road north of Grange Hall Road. The main east-west route is Grange Hall Road. It is along these two spines that a variety of commercial uses are planned, with the railroad tracks to the east and south forming the edge of these more intensive commercial uses. The Central Business District (CBD) is at the southern terminus. *"The CBD should function as the main community gathering place and visitor attraction for the Village. It should also retain the historic character of the Village that gives it so much of its charm."* (Page 51)

North of the CBD is a linear area of planned Mixed Use, which is intended as a combination of single family homes, small businesses, and offices in a walkable environment. The plan identifies this "Midtown" area as a transition between the CBD and the commercial center to the

north. Streetscape improvements are recommended for this area to provide a unified look, including the potential for a boulevard along North Saginaw and pedestrian crossings. At the Visioning Session, residents expressed interest in having different uses in this area. Specific desires were to relocate the industrial uses and add more commercial/retail stores. The plan also indicates the possibility of having a civic use within “Midtown”.

A large concentration of General Commercial is located at Saginaw/North Holly Road and Grange Hall Road. *“This is the area most appropriate for the development of shopping centers, outdoor sales, automobile related businesses, larger chain stores and fast food restaurants.”* (Page 52) Signage and landscaping improvements are recommended for Grange Hall Road, especially since it is a prominent gateway into the Village from Holly Township.

At the fringes along both Grange Hall and Saginaw/North Holly Roads are a limited number of parcels planned for Neighborhood Commercial. These small businesses generate less traffic and can serve as transitional uses between the residential neighborhoods and the Mixed Use and General Commercial.

There are three areas of Industrial shown on the map. One large area is on the north side of Grange Hall Road, east of the railroad track. Another concentration is at the southern boundary around the railroad tracks. The third and smallest site is at the southwestern corner of the Village. This classification allows manufacturing type uses. Less intensive industrial uses like research and light manufacturing are allowed in the Light Industrial-Office Park classification. There are two areas planned for this, one on the south side of Grange Hall Road, south of the Industrial, and the other in the southwestern corner of the Village. A key concern expressed in the plan is to relocate some of the existing industrial uses that are currently in locations felt to be inappropriate.

School sites and Village utility sites (waste water treatment plant) are shown as Public Facilities. Parks are shown separately in the Park classification. While a new transportation route is not shown on the Future Land Use Map, the plan does identify the need for a new north-south route. The alternative favored by the majority of the residents at the Visioning Session was to connect Holly Bush to Old Leake Drive in the eastern part of the Village. Exploring that option is a recommended action item.

Comparison of the draft 2006 Future Land Use Map to the 1997 map

In comparing the two maps, there are a few differences. One change relates to the legend; Office is no longer listed as a future land use classification, while Neighborhood Commercial has been added. All of the areas previously planned for Office are now classified as Neighborhood Commercial, the largest being the eastern frontage along North Holly Road, north of Grange Hall Road. Other areas where Neighborhood Commercial has been added to the map include the north side of Grange Hall Road, west of North Holly Road (previously planned for Low Density Residential) and east of Saginaw at Oakwood (previously planned for Transitional Mixed Use and General Commercial).

Several new areas of Moderate Density Residential have been added to the map. The mobile home parks are now shown in this classification; they had previously been classified as Low

Density Residential. The large parcel at the northern most boundary of the Village, also previously classified as Low Density, is now shown as Moderate Density Residential to reflect recently developed condominiums.

Several sites that had been classified as Public & Quasi Public are now shown as Low Density Residential. These sites include a church, a cemetery, and parcels owned by the Holly Board of Education.

Two other significant changes relate to more intensive land uses. The northeastern most part of the Village is now planned for Mixed Use. This area had previously been shown for Low Density Residential. The other change is in the southwestern most corner, which is now planned for Industrial and Light Industrial-Office Park. This area had previously been planned for Low Density Residential; however the Industrial in this location reflects an existing use.

Coordination with Surrounding Community Boundaries

Under state law, the county's review is required to include a statement indicating whether the proposed plan is "inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township" that received notice of the draft plan. Each of the adjacent communities has been encouraged to provide the Village of Holly with comments if they have any concerns. Included in the master plan is a map showing the master plan classifications surrounding the Village.

West, North, and East Boundary–Holly Township: The Holly Township Master Plan was last amended in November 2003. Holly Township surrounds the Village of Holly on three sides, west, north, and east. The area adjacent to the Village's western edge is one of two sewer/water service districts shown on the Holly Township Land Use Plan map. This is where Holly Township has traditionally planned for its higher density/more intensive land uses. From Quick Road, in the north, to south of Academy, Holly Township has planned for Planned Residential, Commercial/Office at Grange Hall and Fish Lake Road, Multiple Family Residential (5 dwelling units/acre), Mixed Use, and Planned Residential. Within the last few years, a major development proposal of single family and multiple family residential has been approved in this location in Holly Township. The provision of sewer services from the Village of Holly was a requirement to allow these higher intensity uses and coordination issues were addressed at that time. These higher intensity uses are mainly adjacent to established neighborhoods in the Village planned for Low Density Residential (3-5 dwelling units per acre). At the southern most portion of this western edge, Holly Township has planned for Medium Density Residential (one dwelling unit per acre). This is adjacent to Industrial in the Village of Holly, which reflects an existing, small industrial use.

For the rest of the border (to the north and to the east), both communities have planned for residential at varying densities. To the north, Holly Township has planned for Low Density Estate Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres). This is adjacent to Public Facilities (school) and Medium Density Residential in the Village. To the east, the Township has planned for either Low Density Estate Residential or Medium Density Residential. This is adjacent to Medium Density, Mixed Use, Low Density, Public Facilities, or Park in the Village.

As most of the areas at the boundary in the Village are already developed, it is recommended that new residential in the Township be developed in a sensitive manner so as to be compatible with these existing, established neighborhoods.

Holly Township sent a letter indicating density is consistent with the Township's master plan. The Township did request stronger language for signage improvements in the Grange Hall Road corridor and cooperation on the Head Waters Trail.

South Boundary–Rose Township: The Master Plan, Rose Township was adopted in July 2005. The Village of Holly shares its southern border with Rose Township. Rose Township has planned for its most intensive uses to be adjacent to the Village of Holly. At the western most border, Rose Township has planned for Single Family Residential (1.5 acre lots), which is adjacent to Industrial (existing use), Low Density Residential, and Light Industrial-Office Park in the Village. Continuing east, Milford Road is the southern entryway into the Village from Rose Township. From here to the railroad tracks Rose Township has planned for Rural Preservation/Agriculture (1 unit/10 acres). In the Village, this southern entryway is planned for Park.

East of the railroad track is one of two areas of Light Industrial planned in Rose Township. This Light Industrial represents an existing industrial use and is adjacent to the industrial in the Village of Holly. Just to the east of this industrial is High Density Residential (an existing mobile home subdivision) in Rose Township. This High Density Residential is adjacent to Industrial and Public Facilities in Holly Village. Then to the east of the High Density Residential is another larger parcel planned for industrial. This parcel is currently vacant and is adjacent to Low Density Residential in the Village of Holly and Park. This park parcel extends into the geographic township of Rose and is Holly Township Park #2. It is recommended that when this industrial parcel is developed, Rose Township pay close attention to buffering, landscaping, and setback requirements to minimize any potential negative impact on the surrounding residential uses, both in the Village and in the Township, and on the park.

Analysis

The Village of Holly Master Plan provides a good overview of the current status of the community and its desired future development. The plan also contains information not normally included in community plans such as the buildout analysis and maps showing the zoning and master plans of surrounding communities. However, the real strength of the plan is found in how it addresses implementation. Two chapters are particularly strong in identifying needed future actions. The Goals, Objectives and Actions chapter contains a wide range of goals dealing with residential, parks and recreation, commercial, industrial, and transportation issues. Objectives are listed for each goal and then actions are identified to accomplish that objective. The Implementation chapter then takes each of these objectives a step further and assigns a responsible party, priority, and costs to each action. This level of detail is rarely found in community plans but it is important because it provides a crucial road map for the community to follow once the plan is adopted. Most master plans contain a chapter called Implementation but it is usually a generic description of the tools available to implement the plan such as the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and site plan review; however specific actions the community needs to undertake usually are not identified. The Village should be commended for including

this information, and we recommend that the implementation matrix be reviewed annually so the Village can track its implementation progress.

Preparing more detailed studies of the downtown and “midtown” areas are listed as next steps. The plan suggests using local university students to conduct or be involved in these studies. The costs for these actions are labeled as “minor, if students are used”. While having students involved is an excellent strategy, the Village needs to be aware that working with students is very time intensive as they need more direction from Village staff to achieve the desired outcome. The Village may need to budget consultant or other staff time, and it is recommended that they consider this in their “cost” estimate.

Several actions identified in the plan are interesting. In an effort to strengthen existing neighborhoods, it is recommended that the Village “*use a 5 minute walking radius to define neighborhoods. Provide for access to a central open space, natural feature and/or civic feature (such as a government building, public facility, fountain, or public gathering space) for all neighborhoods.*” (Page 36) Walkability is a key concern expressed in the plan with the desire to create pedestrian connections either through repaired or new sidewalks or nature trails. Linking neighborhoods to nearby commercial areas also is an important objective.

Another notable action is to “*conduct a commercial needs analysis for the Village.*” (Page 42) PEDS staff agrees that this is a necessary action given the three different commercial areas in the Village. The buildout analysis identified 38 acres available for new commercial development. It is recommended that a further analysis be done to see how much actual square footage could be accommodated once setbacks, landscaping, and parking requirements are satisfied. The plan further suggests that there might be a need to rezone more land for commercial use in the Grange Hall Road corridor.

While each of the three commercial areas has its own character, the downtown provides the identity for the Village. It is important to ensure that the new commercial uses developed in the Grange Hall Road corridor do not detract from the vitality of commercial uses in the core downtown area. As the master plan states, “*It is in the Village’s best interest to maintain the downtown so that it serves both the residents of Holly and visitors from the surrounding area.*” (Page 43). It is strongly recommended that the Planning Commission work closely with the Downtown Development Authority on the commercial needs analysis to ensure that the downtown remains one of the jewels of the Village. Also, as a Main Street Oakland County (MSOC) community, the Village is encouraged to involve MSOC staff as the Village prepares a detailed sub-area plan for the downtown.

Conclusion

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff commends the Village of Holly on its new master plan.

Based on the review of the surrounding communities’ master plans, the Village of Holly Master Plan is **not** inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township that received notice of the draft plan. Comments were received from Holly Township and are attached.

Oakland County has not prepared a countywide development plan, so there is no countywide plan to which to compare the Holly Draft Master Plan.

Sincerely,

Charlotte P. Burckhardt, AICP, PCP
Principal Planner

Enclosures