

November 15, 2006

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

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 06-09, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the Master Plan, Village of Franklin, Draft September 11, 2006

Dear Chairperson Douglas and Committee Members:

The Village of Franklin 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, photographs, 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 Franklin 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 December 5, 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 Franklin 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 Clerk, the Cities of Southfield and Farmington Hills; the Village of Bingham Farms; Bloomfield and Southfield Townships; DTE Energy; Consumers Energy; and Comcast Cable Communications were sent copies of the draft plan. All of these communities and utilities have received notice of the CZC meeting. No comments have been received.

Public Participation Process

In addition to regular Planning Commission meetings, two special community meetings are noted in the plan. The first meeting was held in October 2005. The Planning Commission had developed a list of priorities, and they were presented to the public at that meeting. *"The meeting confirmed many of the planning priorities that had already been identified, but also shed new light and emphasis on certain priorities, such as roads, traffic, and pedestrian access."* (Page 1-1)

The second meeting in February 2006 focused on the Village Center. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding the Village Center were identified at the meeting, and the results of this SWOT analysis are documented in the plan.

Plan Contents

The Plan is divided into the following ten chapters: Planning Goals for Franklin; Inventory and Analysis; Village Character and Neighborhoods; Historic Areas: Appearance and Identity; The Village Center-Commercial; The Village Center-Residential, Recreational, and Cultural; Community Facilities and Open Space; Trees and Vegetation Management; Traffic and

Circulation; and Implementation. The overriding goal expressed in the plan is to retain the rural character and historic nature of a 19th Century village.

Franklin is a small, residential village in the southeastern part of Oakland County. The Village enjoyed its greatest growth in the 1960s, with a population high of 3,311 in 1970. Due to a decrease in the person per household number, the population has been slowly declining. According to the Census, the 2000 population is 2,937. Between now and 2030, the population is expected to decrease further. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) forecasts that the Village of Franklin will have a slight decline in population by 2030 and will be at 2,793 persons.

Village residents are more affluent than the county average. The median family income in 1999 for the Village of Franklin was \$139,339. This compares to the median family income for Oakland County of \$75,540. Higher educational attainment and professional and management employment are responsible for the higher median incomes.

The Village of Franklin is almost exclusively single family residential. According to the 2004 Land Use Inventory prepared by the planning consultant, 73% of the Village is in a residential use. Minimum residential lot sizes range from 12,000 square feet to 3 acres.

Rights-of-Way make up the next highest land use at 16% of land total. Non-residential land uses make up an extremely small percentage of the community (less than 2%), and are confined to two locations. The main location of non-residential use is the Village Center, located along Franklin Road, just south of Fourteen Mile Road. The Village Center is the heart of the Village. A large Village Green anchors the southern boundary. This area of Public and Quasi-Public uses includes the cemetery, open space, post office, library, Village Hall (Broughton House), and other public uses. Office or commercial uses in historic structures front along Franklin Road, north of the Village Green. Multi-family residential is located behind the commercial and office uses on the east side of Franklin Road. The Village Center, along with some of the surrounding homes, falls within both the Local Historic District and the National Historic District. The Franklin Village Center was one of the first registered historic districts in the State of Michigan.

The only other non-residential location is a single parcel of office use at the southwest corner of Thirteen Mile Road and Telegraph. The tax base implications of a predominantly single family community are noted in the plan. *“Current residential structures will continue to be reassessed at higher rates as the cost of living and demand for services increases.”* (Page 2-15)

Telegraph Road forms the eastern boundary of the Village of Franklin. This multi-lane, statewide arterial provides residents with direct access to I-696 and the Lodge Expressway, just south in the City of Southfield. Another major road, Northwestern Highway, is located at the far southwestern corner, just outside the Village of Franklin. While these arterials provide residents with good access, they also contribute to one of the threats mentioned in the plan. The Village is concerned with maintaining distinct residential edges along its borders. Whereas other communities have put their more intensive uses along these arterials, the Village of Franklin wishes to keep residential at its borders. *“While Franklin’s location on these major roads makes the Village particularly desirable to developers, allowing commercial or other non-residential development on Franklin’s edges would erode and blur the distinct boundaries of the community. Entering the Village would no longer be such a notable transition.”* (Page 3-3)

The two major roads within the Village are Franklin Road for north-south travel and Thirteen Mile Road for east-west travel. Fourteen Mile Road forms the northern boundary with Bloomfield Township. While Fourteen Mile Road also allows for east-west travel, it is unpaved west of Franklin Road.

Many of the local residential roads follow a curvilinear pattern. These narrow, winding, tree lined roads contribute to rural character. Sidewalks are prohibited in the Village outside of the Village Center because they are perceived to detract from this rural character desired by Village residents. Pedestrian circulation is addressed in the plan by suggesting that non-motorized trails could be located in the road rights-of-way and by increasing connections between neighborhoods.

Other key elements of the rural character come from the natural resources present in the Village. The Franklin River branch of the Rouge River flows through the northeast quadrant of the Village. Ravines along the river as well as steep slopes in the western half of the Village contribute to the natural character. Significant tree canopies, mature vegetation, and natural landscaping are important elements of this rural character. The plan includes a chapter addressing Trees and Vegetation Management. Emphasis is given to a tree replacement program that already exists in the Village. In addition, a recommendation is made to develop a landscape master plan. *“Such a plan could inform maintenance of public areas, guide new development to be compatible with the Village’s character, and serve as a resource for individual homeowners and business owners seeking to landscape their own properties.”* (Page 4-5)

This rural character has extended to the provision of utilities. The Village of Franklin is unique in this part of Oakland County. Residents rely on individual wells, and until the mid-1990s, septic systems were used exclusively. Due to septic field failures, sanitary sewers were installed in 1995, and now about 50% of residents are connected to sanitary sewers.

The plan concludes with an Implementation Plan. Responsibility for implementing the plan is given to the Village Council, Village Administration, Planning Commission, Historic District Commission, and others including volunteer committees, business owners, and consultants. An Implementation Matrix summarizes the key recommendations made in the plan and identifies who has responsibility for the task and the timeframe for completion. Guidelines for historic preservation, landscaping, parking, signage, and lighting are recommended to be developed for the Village Center.

Land Use Map

The Future Land Use map is attached. *“The intent of the Future Land Use Map is to maintain the Village of Franklin as a predominantly large lot, single family community in a rural setting, with a single vibrant, historic, mixed use Village Center.”* (Page 1-11)

The Village is mainly planned for residential use. Only two locations are planned for non-residential uses. They are at the north end of Franklin Road near Fourteen Mile Road (the Village Center), and at Thirteen Mile Road and Telegraph. Otherwise, the rest of the Village is planned for one of the following six residential densities:

1. Estate Residential (130,000 square foot lot or approximately a 3 acre minimum)
2. Large Lot Residential (65,000 square foot lot or approximately a 1½ acre minimum)
3. Low Density Residential (30,000 to 42,000 square foot lot area)
4. Medium Low Density Residential (22,500 square foot area)

5. Medium Density Residential (15,000 square foot lot area)
6. Medium High Density Residential (12,000 square foot lot area)

The lowest density is located in the center of the Village while the highest densities are adjacent to the non-residential uses in the Village Center. Low Density Residential is the main land use classification planned, with 44% of the Village planned for approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ to an acre lots.

The future planned uses in the Village Center are comparable to the land uses that currently exist. Office or Commercial uses are intended to remain along Franklin Road with parking situated behind the buildings. Public and Quasi-Public uses will continue to make up a good portion of the southern half of the Village Center.

Due to the small size and single family orientation of the Village, no industrial or other intensive land uses are planned.

Comparison of the draft 2006 Land Use Plan map to the 1997 map

The 1997 and 2006 maps are almost identical. No changes were made to the residential boundaries except for two locations. The first location is at the southwest corner of Thirteen Mile and Telegraph Roads where Office or Commercial is now shown. This corner had previously been planned for Medium Low Density Residential. The second change is in the Village Center. A small area of parking is now shown on the west side of Franklin Road behind the Office or Commercial. These three lots had previously been planned for Low Density Residential.

Two additional small parcels of Public & Quasi-Public also have been added to the 2006 map. One parcel is at the corner of Vincennes and Franklin Roads, and the other parcel is at the corner of Carol and Franklin Roads. Both of these parcels had been planned for Office or Commercial on the 1997 map.

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 Franklin with comments if they have any concerns.

North Boundary – Bloomfield Township: The Bloomfield Township Master Plan for Future Land Use is undated; however the map was amended in January 1991. Bloomfield Township and Franklin share a two-mile border along Fourteen Mile Road from Inkster to Telegraph Road. Bloomfield Township has planned for One-Family Residential (1.5-2 dwelling units/acre) for this entire border except for one small parcel of Office at the northeast corner of Franklin and Fourteen Mile Roads. Franklin has planned this border exclusively for single family residential, either Medium Low Density or Low Density Residential. This is a harmonious border with comparable lot sizes.

East Boundary – Village of Bingham Farms: The Village of Bingham Farms Master Plan was adopted in September 2004. Bingham Farms and Franklin share a mile and a half boundary along Telegraph Road from Fourteen Mile Road to a point $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of Thirteen Mile Road. Telegraph Road is treated differently by the two communities. Bingham Farms has concentrated its most intensive land uses along Telegraph; it is mostly planned for Professional Service and

Commercial with a small area of High Density Residential (Special Study Area, 2.5 dwelling units/acre) at Fourteen Mile Road. Along this entire border, Franklin Village has planned for single family residential of varying densities, Large Lot (1.5 acre minimum lot size), Low Density (30,000 to 42,000 square foot lot area), and Medium Low Density (.5 acre minimum lot size) Residential. The only intensive land use in Franklin along this border is one small area of Office or Commercial at the corner of Thirteen Mile Road and Telegraph. While there are definitely more intensive land uses in Bingham Farms than in Franklin, the presence of Telegraph Road acts as a buffer between the uses. Because of the volumes along Telegraph and its right-of-way width, the road itself is almost like another land use separating the intensive land uses in Bingham Farms from the residential uses in Franklin.

South Boundary – City of Southfield: The City of Southfield Master Plan Executive Summary is dated November 1988; however the Future Land Use Plan map is undated. The Village of Franklin shares its southern border with the City of Southfield. The Southfield Future Land Use Plan map shows much of this border for Single Family Residential, with Multiple Family Residential planned east and west of Franklin Road. At both the eastern and western extremes of this border, more intensive uses are planned in Southfield. Office/Research is planned at Telegraph, and Commercial/Office is planned at Northwestern and Inkster. Franklin has planned this entire border for single family residential. The back yards of the homes in Franklin abut the parcels in the City of Southfield. While this is not a completely compatible border, the uses are existing, and from the aerials, it appears that there is sufficient buffering between uses.

West Boundary – City of Farmington Hills: The City of Farmington Hills Master Plan for Future Land Use was adopted in March 1996. The City of Farmington Hills and the Village of Franklin share a mile and a half border along Inkster from Northwestern Highway to Fourteen Mile Road. Other than a parcel of Small Office planned along Northwestern, this is a very compatible border. Farmington Hills is planning for Single Family Residential along this border with a large Golf Course (Franklin Hills Country Club) at Thirteen Mile Road. Franklin is planning for all single family residential of varying densities.

Northwest Boundary – Southfield Township: The Southfield Township Master Plan was adopted in November 2002. Southfield Township consists of three distinct geographic areas, one of which is adjacent to the Village of Franklin. The triangular shaped parcel, at Inkster and Fourteen Mile Road, is in Southfield Township. It consists of nine residential parcels and seven homes, and is planned for Single Family Residential. It is adjacent to Medium Low Density Residential in Franklin making this a very consistent border.

Analysis

The Village of Franklin is a unique community that has developed quite differently than neighboring communities. This distinction is valued by Village residents as is evident from part of the Village's vision statement. "*It is locally known with pride as 'The town that time forgot'.*" (Page 1-4) Ingredients that contribute to the fundamental character of Franklin are well documented in the plan. Photographs of historic structures and scenic views help the reader understand the special qualities that make up this small village. Challenges to maintaining this uniqueness are identified in the plan. From a residential perspective, challenges include teardowns and out-of-scale new development, non-residential encroachment on the borders, and light and noise pollution. The plan identifies the need to re-evaluate the zoning ordinance to determine if minimum lot coverage and home sizes should be changed. Allowing smaller homes

could mean that new houses would remain appropriately sited on their lots and not overwhelm neighboring homes.

The Village Center takes center stage in the plan because it provides a key identity for the Village. The Village Center is unlike some traditional downtowns where the commercial uses are in attached buildings that form commercial blocks on both sides of Main Street. Here, individual, free-standing buildings provide more of a hamlet feeling where setbacks vary and a variety of architectural styles exist. Most of the office or commercial uses are on the east side of Franklin Road and front historic homes on the west side of the road. The plan identifies those historic and rural elements that constitute the “*essential character*” of the Village Center and recommends ways to strengthen and preserve these elements.

One key concern is the need to strengthen the retail base of the Village Center so it becomes more of a destination and has more pedestrian traffic. An implementation action item is “*working through the Main Street program, establish an organization of businesspeople necessary to spearhead the revitalization of the Village Center.*” (Page 10-3) After this master plan draft was completed, an announcement was made that the Village of Franklin was accepted into a new Mentoring Program that is part of the Main Street Oakland County (MSOC) Program. This program is designed to educate communities about the MSOC Program and help position them so they can be accepted into the full Main Street Program if they decide to apply. It is hoped that the Village will take full advantage of this opportunity, as the Main Street Program could be an excellent tool for the Village to use in strengthening their Village Center.

Conclusion

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

Based on the review of the surrounding communities’ master plans, the Master Plan, Village of Franklin is **not** inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township that received notice of the draft plan.

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

Sincerely,

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Enclosures