

January 2, 2007

Commissioner David Potts, Chairperson
Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee
1200 North Telegraph Road
Pontiac, MI 48341

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 06-11, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the draft City of Berkley Master Plan Update

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The City of Berkley Planning Commission has prepared a new master plan to replace its 1989 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 City of Berkley 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 January 9, 2007 Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee (CZC) meeting falls within our 95-day comment period. Neighboring communities have 65 days to submit comments directly to Berkley 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 City's Planning Director, the Cities of Huntington Woods, Oak Park, Southfield, Royal Oak, and Pleasant Ridge; the Berkley School District; Consumers Energy; and DTE Energy were sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these communities and agencies have received notice of the CZC meeting. Comments have been received from Southfield and Pleasant Ridge, and are attached.

Public Participation Process

The master planning process started with a kick off meeting for the public. Goals for the master plan were discussed at that meeting. Then after the existing conditions report was prepared, an open house was held in April 2006. *"The open house allowed the nearly 200 interested residents, business owners, and investors an opportunity to express their ideas either verbally and/or in writing."* (Page 3)

Plan Contents

The Plan is divided into the following nine chapters: Introduction; Existing Conditions; Future Land Use Plan; Economic Conditions and Market Gap Analysis; Transportation; Community Services and Facilities; Neighborhood Reinforcement Recommendations; Enhancing Bungalows; and Catalytic Projects.

Berkley is a small, residential city in the southeastern part of Oakland County and is considered a “first-tier or inner ring suburb”. The City’s greatest era of population growth and development occurred following World War II and continued until 1960, when its population was 23,275. From that high, the City’s population progressively declined, and in 2000 the population was 15,531. Population decline is attributed to increasing suburbanization and a decrease in the person per household number. Between now and 2030, the population is expected to further decrease. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) forecasts that Berkley will have a slight decrease in population by 2030 and will be at 13,552 persons. This 13% decrease is comparable to what other communities in southeast Oakland County will be experiencing during that time.

Tree lined neighborhoods of detached single family homes form the basis of the City of Berkley. Almost 63% of the total acreage in Berkley is currently used for single family residential. “*While lots sizes range from approximately 3,800 square feet to more than 12,500 square feet, nearly 70% consist of lots ranging from 5,000 to 7,000 square feet.*” (Page 12) These small lot sizes make infill of new residential challenging. Ensuring that new homes are compatible in character with existing homes is a concern expressed in the plan. Guidelines are included that address scale, setback, and garage orientation for new residential development.

Maintaining the older housing stock is another concern. Most of the homes in Berkley were built between 1940 and 1970 with bungalows being the most popular architectural style. These smaller, older homes do not contain some of the modern features desired by today’s homeowner. The plan encourages appropriate remodeling that would allow these homes to appeal to a wider market while still being architecturally compatible with adjacent homes. The plan provides some conceptual drawings to show how expansions could be done in a harmonious manner. To accomplish some of these changes, the plan indicates zoning ordinance revisions may be needed, and tax incentives should be considered.

The next highest land use category is Municipal/Parking at 18%. This category includes road rights-of-way as well as municipal parking lots. The City was developed using the traditional grid pattern of streets and sidewalks. This allows for good access and connections between neighborhoods. Walkability and pedestrian access are topics highlighted in the plan.

Roads in Berkley are under the jurisdiction of the City except for three roads. Woodward Avenue is under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation, and Greenfield Avenue and Twelve Mile Road are under the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC). The Transportation chapter provides a good discussion of transportation management techniques. Access management, traffic calming, sidewalks, pathways, transit, and way finding (signage) are identified as important transportation elements that need attention for a vibrant downtown and safe commercial corridors. In particular, traffic calming measures are discussed as ways to help discourage cut through traffic in neighborhoods, making the City’s residential areas safer for pedestrians.

The third highest land use category is Cemetery at 8.5% of land total. The Roseland Park Cemetery is located in the far northeastern corner of the City and covers about 100 acres. It provides a green gateway into the City along Woodward Avenue.

Commercial and office uses are mainly confined to three corridors, Twelve Mile Road, Coolidge Highway, and Woodward Avenue. Downtown Berkley is located along Twelve Mile Road between Coolidge Highway and Greenfield Road. Most of these commercial corridors have very shallow depths and are only one lot deep, which leaves little room for a transition/buffer for the residential located behind the more intensive frontage uses.

Industrial uses are found along Eleven Mile Road at the southern boundary of the City. According to the market gap analysis, *“nearly one-quarter of the buildings located along the western leg of 11 Mile Road are currently vacant, with various wholesale, retail, services, and other activities sharing the remainder of the occupied buildings.”* (Page 55)

Berkley is mainly built out and has little land for new development as less than .1% is considered vacant (1.3 acres). The emphasis in the plan is on maintaining the City’s residential nature and identifying redevelopment opportunities. Four special projects are called out in the plan that can act as catalysts to new development in the City. These “Catalytic Projects” are:

1. Downtown Plaza
2. Coolidge Linear Park
3. Greenfield Road Access Management
4. Bacon/Beverly Residential

Each of these projects will be described later in this review.

There is not a separate chapter dealing with implementation of the plan. Rather, recommendations are embedded in the various chapters and are summarized as action steps at the end of chapters. Action steps are identified for future land use, economic development, transportation, neighborhoods, and community services and facilities. Responsibility has been assigned to each action step. Responsible parties vary depending on the recommendation but include the City Council, Planning Commission, Building Department, Downtown Development Authority, Department of Public Works, or other City Departments.

Land Use Map

The Future Land Use map (attached) is a visual representation of the City’s land use policies. Single Family Residential is the largest planned land use, encompassing more than 60% of Berkley. There is only one category of Single Family Residential and no density range is given. The map shows areas of Multiple Family Residential located along the Coolidge corridor between Eleven Mile and Twelve Mile Roads. Most of these sites represent existing multiple family uses; however the intersection at Wiltshire and Coolidge is a new area planned for Multiple Family Residential.

Many of the non residential land uses are grouped under the general heading of Commercial/Mixed Use. This heading includes the following classifications:

1. Downtown
2. General Commercial and Service
3. Suburban Commercial
4. Office/Medical

5. Mixed Use
6. Consumer Trades

These classifications are all located along the major thoroughfares of Coolidge, Eleven Mile, Twelve Mile, and Woodward Avenue.

The Downtown classification extends to the limits of Berkley's downtown on Twelve Mile Road between Coolidge and Tyler. Intended land use is a mixture of retail, eating, and entertainment establishments that will make this part of Berkley a destination. While there should be a retail emphasis on first floor uses, offices and residential could be located on upper stories. Historic architecture and pedestrian orientation are key elements desired for the downtown.

One of the catalytic projects is proposed for the downtown, the Downtown Plaza. The intent behind this project is to create a central gathering place in the middle of downtown at Robina and Twelve Mile. For one block north and south of Twelve Mile Road, Robina would be closed off to vehicular access, and pedestrian oriented plazas would be created. *"These plazas could be used as gathering spaces for special events, holiday celebrations, and everyday relaxation and casual recreation. The development of periphery townhomes and second story residential units will help create a concentration of people to use the downtown businesses and serve to help rejuvenate existing downtown businesses and draw in new redevelopment."* (Page 46)

The General Commercial and Service category is intended to attract automobile traffic from a wider market area. This use is planned for high intensity areas along Coolidge, and on Woodward between Eleven and Twelve Mile Roads. The plan calls for a portion of the parcels fronting on Woodward to be increased in depth, as land becomes available, to allow for commercial redevelopment with bigger buildings and more parking. This area, depicted by a red dashed line, currently includes some single family residential homes. When this redevelopment does occur, buffering the adjacent single family residential from this new development is identified as essential.

Suburban Commercial is planned for the entrances into the City at Twelve Mile and Greenfield, Eleven Mile and Coolidge, and Greenfield and Eleven Mile. This classification is intended to permit auto-oriented uses while providing attractive gateways into the City.

Office/Medical is planned along Woodward north of Wiltshire, on the south side of Twelve Mile between Woodward and Coolidge, and to the south along Coolidge. This category will provide support for the William Beaumont Hospital complex located just north in Royal Oak by concentrating professional medical offices in these locations. In an effort to attract patients and visitors from the hospital to downtown Berkley, a linear park is proposed along Coolidge. This Catalytic Project is intended to provide a visual and pedestrian connection between the hospital and downtown Berkley.

The Mixed Use category is located in two areas, along Twelve Mile west of the downtown to Greenfield, and on Eleven Mile east of Coolidge. These areas are intended to promote a mixture of small scale retail establishments with associated upper story residential units, condominiums, or loft apartments.

The Consumer Trades category is planned for the north side of Eleven Mile Road between Greenfield and Coolidge. This is the current location of industrial uses in the City. *“There is little allure for these sites to continue as industrial due to their impacts on residential and because the current market for industrial development requires larger sites and structures. Uses that are appropriate for this area are the hybrid uses that are both commercial and industrial because they make and sell, or store, products on site.”* (Page 15) This new classification permits light industrial type uses but also encourages the adaptation of existing buildings for these new retail uses that require large amounts of space or storage areas.

Roseland Park Cemetery occupies a large portion of the City north of Twelve Mile between Coolidge and Woodward. The plan calls for approximately 1.5 acres in the cemetery’s southwest corner to be developed as a veterans’ park.

The Institutional category is planned for uses such as municipal buildings, schools, places of worship, and senior housing facilities, while the Parks and Recreation Facilities category is intended to accommodate all types of active and passive recreation. Both categories have locations throughout the City and are often located adjacent to each other.

The map shows the addition of two “Potential Institutional Areas” along Greenfield. Single family homes are located on the east side of Greenfield in the City of Berkley; however non residential uses of commercial, office, and multiple family are located on the west side in the City of Southfield. This mixture of land uses plus the high traffic volume has contributed to the deteriorating residential quality along this heavily traveled corridor. *“Rather than encouraging a shift of residential properties into low rent retail, office and service uses, a different approach is appropriate.”* (Page 106) This change in focus is the third Catalytic Project mentioned in the plan. The City would like to see institutional uses develop along this corridor, including senior housing and assisted living facilities. In order to provide sufficient acreage and depth for these new uses, this classification goes back about 1½ blocks to Ellwood. With proper access management, the residential between Catalpa and Beverly could remain along Greenfield.

Finally, the fourth Catalytic Project refers to the relocation of the City’s Department of Public Works site from south of Twelve Mile between Bacon and Phillips to Eleven Mile Road. The Bacon/Beverly Residential project proposes that the old DPW site be redeveloped for residential use. This 2.5 acre site could be developed with townhouses to provide more residential density near the downtown.

Comparison of the draft 2006 Land Use Plan map to the 1989 map

The 1989 master plan did not contain a traditional future land use map. Instead, a Planning Issues map was included that used different colored dots to identify opportunities and concerns such as “underutilized properties”, “façade renovation needed”, or “new development”. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the two maps to see what land use areas are planned to change. However, in reviewing the 1989 map, it appears the need for changes along Greenfield Road was identified in the 1989 plan. The concept of increasing the development depth along Woodward Avenue also was considered.

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 City of Berkley with comments if they have any concerns.

North and East Boundary – City of Royal Oak: The Master Plan City of Royal Oak was adopted in August 1999. Berkley shares its entire northern and eastern borders with the City of Royal Oak. At the western portion of this border along Webster Street, Royal Oak has planned for a small area of Multiple Family Residential at Greenfield Road and then Single Family Residential–Medium Density (5,000 sq. ft. minimum lot size) east to William Beaumont Hospital (Public/Institutional) and then more Single Family Residential–Medium Density to Coolidge. Berkley has planned for all Single Family Residential in this area except for two small areas of Parks and Recreational Facilities. East of Coolidge, the Roseland Park Cemetery extends into both communities.

East and south of the cemetery along Woodward Avenue, Royal Oak has planned for General Commercial to Eleven Mile Road area with the exception of the Shrine of the Little Flower church and school at Twelve Mile, and Multiple Family Residential north of the church. Along this border, Berkley has planned for Cemetery south to Twelve Mile and then General Commercial and Service or Office/Medical to Eleven Mile. This border is very compatible.

South Boundary – City of Huntington Woods: The 1993 Huntington Woods Land Use Plan was adopted in 1993. Berkley shares the eastern portion of its southern border, between Coolidge Highway and Woodward Avenue, with Huntington Woods. At Woodward Avenue and Eleven Mile Road, both communities have planned for small areas of commercial. Adjacent to the commercial, Berkley has planned for a small area of Multiple Family Residential and then predominantly Single Family Residential west to Mortenson. Huntington Woods has planned for an area of Parks and Recreation adjacent to the commercial at Woodward, and then predominantly Single Family Residential west to the Mortenson/Scotia Road area. The only exception in Huntington Woods is an area of Retail Sales and Service and Parks and Recreation at Meadowcrest Boulevard.

West of Mortenson, Berkley has planned for Mixed Use to Berkley Street and then Suburban Commercial to Coolidge. In this area, Huntington Woods has institutional uses adjacent to the Mixed Use (Municipal Office; Public Safety, Public Works and Related Facilities; Parks and Recreation; and House of Worship) plus Single Family Residential. Retail Sales and Service is then adjacent to the Suburban Commercial at Coolidge. These mixed land uses are mainly compatible along this portion of Eleven Mile Road.

South Boundary – City of Oak Park: The City of Oak Park Master Plan was adopted in August 1996 and amended in 2005. Berkley shares the western portion of its southern border, between Coolidge Highway and Greenfield Road, with the City of Oak Park. Along this border Berkley has mainly planned for Consumer Trades (light industrial type uses with some retail). Suburban Commercial is planned at both Greenfield Road and Coolidge, and a small area of Institutional is planned between Phillips and Prairie Streets. Along this border, Oak Park has

mainly planned for Light Industrial with a High Tech Corridor designation. Like Berkley, Oak Park has planned for commercial uses at the intersections with Greenfield and Coolidge. General Business is planned at Greenfield and Neighborhood Shopping is west of Coolidge. The border with Oak Park is compatible.

West 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. Berkley shares its entire western border with the City of Southfield. From the north, Southfield has planned for Office/Research from Webster south to Edwards and then Commercial at Twelve Mile Road. Along this same portion, Berkley has planned for Single Family Residential with a Potential Institutional Area overlay from Webster south to Edwards and then Suburban Commercial at Twelve Mile Road.

Between Twelve and Eleven Mile Roads, Southfield has planned for a variety of uses, Commercial, Office/Research, Institutional/Public (County Health Division South), Parks/Open Space, and Multiple Family Residential. Berkley has planned for Single Family Residential south of Beverly with a Potential Institutional Area overlay from Catalpa south. At Eleven Mile, Berkley has planned for a small area of Suburban Commercial.

As previously noted in the review, this border with Southfield along Greenfield Road has some incompatible land uses. The plan acknowledges that the residential in Berkley has been negatively impacted by the non residential uses across the road and by the high traffic volumes along Greenfield. For these reasons, Berkley has proposed a change in land use for this section. The addition of the Potential Institutional Area overlay makes this border more compatible and shows that the City is anticipating and encouraging a change to institutional uses that will be more compatible with the uses in the City of Southfield.

Analysis

As a built out community, the City of Berkley does not have vacant land available for new development. Therefore, redevelopment will provide opportunities for the City in terms of tax base and new land uses. Four distinct projects are described in the plan that Berkley hopes will act as catalysts to jump start redevelopment in the City. *“The City is committed to all elements of the Master Plan Update, but is especially focused on these four projects.”* (Page 4) The scope of each project appears doable and not so overly ambitious that they are financially unfeasible. These Catalytic Projects offer exciting possibilities for the City and should be pursued.

Interestingly, there is an emphasis on shared services in this master plan. In particular, the plan notes the prospect of working with Huntington Woods on sharing public work services, and the possible new location of the DPW on Eleven Mile Road would allow for a more mutually convenient location to serve both communities. Being receptive to sharing services is an important consideration for communities in this economic climate. Oakland County supports communities’ efforts to consolidate resources and services to serve their residents more efficiently.

One of Berkley’s greatest assets is its downtown. The plan acknowledges the need to add vibrancy to the downtown by attracting more customers and pedestrians. Therefore, the

Downtown Plaza is an important catalytic project for the community and should be pursued. The plan also indicates the need to “*actively manage the downtown redevelopment, such as participating in Oakland County’s Main Street program or establishing a development coordinator/liaison for active advocacy of the City’s overall economic development.*” (Page 98) The City of Berkley recently 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 City will take full advantage of this opportunity, as the Main Street Program could be an excellent tool for Berkley to use in strengthening their downtown.

Conclusion

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

Based on the review of the surrounding communities’ master plans, the City of Berkley Master Plan Update is **not** inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township that received notice of the draft plan. The Cities of Southfield and Pleasant Ridge sent comments, and they are attached.

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

Sincerely,

Charlotte P. Burckhardt, AICP, PCP
Principal Planner

Enclosures