

March 19, 2008

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

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 08-03, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of Master Plan Update, City of South Lyon (dated February 2008)

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The South Lyon Planning Commission is proposing to amend its 2002 Master Plan of Future Land Use by adding updated information on land use and demographics. The following is a review and analysis of the proposed amendment.

Under the recent amendments to the Municipal Planning Act, which took effect December 20, 2006, the City of South Lyon is required to send a copy of the draft plan to Oakland County and neighboring communities for comment prior to adoption. Oakland County has 40 days to submit comments on amendments. The April 1, 2008 Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee (CZC) meeting falls within our 40-day comment period. Neighboring communities also have 40 days to submit comments directly to South Lyon and are asked to send a copy of any comments to the County as well. Once the comment period has expired, the Planning Commission can hold a public hearing and take final action to amend the plan.

According to South Lyon's Planning Consultant, Lyon, Green Oak, Salem, and Northfield Townships; the Livingston County Planning Commission, the Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board, and SEMCOG were sent a copy of the draft amendment. All of these communities and agencies have received notice of the CZC meeting. No comments were received as of March 19, 2008.

### **Amendment Contents**

As it had been five years since the Master Plan of Future Land Use was adopted, in 2007 the South Lyon Planning Commission reviewed its plan to see what areas, if any, needed updating. The Planning Commission felt the Master Plan had served them well, and they have used it as a guide when rezonings and development proposals were submitted for review. The one area that was identified for update was statistical information. Therefore, this amendment consists of updates to existing land use and demographic information.

The City of South Lyon is located in the extreme southwestern corner of Oakland County, adjacent to both Livingston and Washtenaw Counties. Close proximity to I-96 (less than four miles to the north) and US-23 (about five miles to the west) provides residents with good regional access. This access, along with its downtown and small town character, make South Lyon a desirable place to locate, and new development has occurred in the last few years.

To update land use information, the consultant undertook a windshield survey to ascertain changes in land use since the last inventory was prepared in 1999. The attached Existing Land Use map for the City of South Lyon represents existing use as of 2007. The majority of land is in a residential land use. Both one-family and two-family homes are shown as Single Family Residential on the map. Several areas shown as vacant in 1999 are now shown as Single Family Residential. This is not surprising as 448 building permits were issued for single family homes between 2000 and 2006. New residential development includes two areas at the northern boundary and the subdivision north of Ten Mile Road at the western edge of the city. Part of this Ten Mile Road subdivision, and the commercial and quasi public uses east of Pontiac Trail in the southern part of the city appear to be annexations to South Lyon since 1999.

The 2007 map also makes a distinction between Commercial and Office uses. The majority of these uses are located along Lafayette/Pontiac Trail. In the last few years, some new commercial has developed both north and south of Reynold Sweet Parkway on the east side of Lafayette/Pontiac Trail. *“Here, residential dwellings have given way to commercial.”* (Page 7)

In reviewing the map, some interesting observations can be made, although not changes since 1999. A very large Multiple Family development is located south of Eleven Mile Road, west of Lafayette, and several large school sites are located throughout the city. Private Open Space has been incorporated into many of the newer subdivisions. Municipal parks and the Huron Valley Trail are shown on the map; the “tail” of the city consists of the largest public park in South Lyon. In addition, a number of large vacant sites still exist that allow for future development.

Since 2000, South Lyon has shown modest population growth. The 2000 population was 10,036. *“SEMCOG’s current May 2007 population estimate is 11,192, while their 2030 forecast predicts 13,871 residents.”* (Page 10) The City contains a mixture of both young families and older residents. It is predicted that school enrollment will rise due to the number of families with school aged children that are attracted to South Lyon. The number of residents 65+ also will increase. *“Even though the senior population is predicted to age at a steady rate, the number of residents in the Age 65+ category is predicted to grow 135% between 2000-2030. This large increase can have an effect on City services.”* (Page 17) Updates to other population characteristics, such as employment, educational attainment, and age distribution are included in the amendment, along with analyses of what these demographic statistics mean for the community.

As part of the update, future action items were identified based on what the demographic changes showed. A range of housing options, especially for older residents, is encouraged. A property maintenance code is suggested to maintain the above average median home values. Other recommendations include reviewing the option of a Corridor Improvement Authority to improve Lafayette/Pontiac Trail outside the downtown and updating zoning standards.

## **Analysis**

One demographic component that may offer opportunity for the City in the future is educational attainment. Over thirty-one percent (31.3%) of South Lyon residents have a Bachelor’s degree with 10% holding a Graduate or Professional degree. The importance of an educated population is stressed as part of the New Economy. As our economy shifts from manufacturing-based to

knowledge-based, a highly educated workforce becomes a draw for new jobs. “*Dr. Richard Florida, in his 2001 work, The Rise of the Creative Class, indicated that people will no longer follow businesses, but businesses will follow people...South Lyon has advantages with their educated population as it has been noted that educational attainment is “the” factor in determining economic welfare.*” (Page 14) Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff has been doing research on the New Economy and feels it is critical that communities start to address this in their master plans. We are pleased that the Planning Commission is discussing the New Economy and what it means for South Lyon. In addition to its educated population, South Lyon has other advantages such as its downtown, park and trail system, and walkable neighborhoods. These assets should help position South Lyon to compete in the New Economy.

### **Conclusion**

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff commends the City of South Lyon for reviewing its plan and updating inventory data. By examining population and land use statistics, trends and implications were brought to the Planning Commission’s attention, and needed next steps were identified in the amendment.

As no changes were proposed to the Future Land Use map, there is no impact at community boundaries from this update. Therefore, the Master Plan Update, City of South Lyon 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 plan.

Sincerely,

Charlotte P. Burckhardt, AICP, PCP  
Principal Planner

Enclosure