

June 30, 2008

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

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 08-06, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the Ortonville Master Plan (dated March 24, 2008)

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The Village of Ortonville Planning Commission has prepared a new master plan to replace its 1980 The Ortonville Plan. The following is a review and analysis of the proposed plan.

Under the amendments to the Municipal Planning Act, which took effect December 20, 2006, Ortonville is required to send a copy of the draft plan to Oakland County and neighboring communities for comment prior to adoption. Oakland County has 63 days to submit comments on a draft plan. The July 8, 2008 Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee (CZC) meeting falls within our 63-day comment period. Neighboring communities also have 63 days to submit comments directly to Ortonville 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 adopt the plan.

According to the Ortonville Village Manager, Brandon and Groveland Townships, the Ortonville Downtown Development Authority, and SEMCOG were sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these communities and agencies have received notice of the CZC meeting. No comments were received.

Public Participation Process

“During the planning process, a series of public input initiatives were conducted to ensure that the Master Plan reflects the vision of Village residents, representatives, and property owners.” (Page 73) The plan does not elaborate on what these initiatives were but it is implied that this input was used in the formulation of the goals and objectives listed in the plan. Appendix A of the plan is to contain a Summary of Public Input but the appendix was not included in the draft copy sent out for review. The cover letter sent with the draft plan indicates that an open house will be held in the near future to allow the public to discuss the draft plan.

Plan Contents

The Plan consists of the following sections: Introduction; The Ortonville Plan; Existing Conditions; Historic Preservation; Goals and Objectives; Circulation Plan; and Implementation. Three appendices are listed in the Table of Contents but they were not included in the draft plan. They will contain a Summary of Public Input, Historic Preservation Survey Forms, and Establishing a Local Historic District.

Ortonville is a small, historic village located within Brandon Township in northern Oakland County. The history of the Village goes back to 1848 when Amos Orton arrived in the area. The

saw mill, grist mill, and blacksmith shop he built formed the nucleus of the town that is now known as Ortonville. Ortonville remains a small community even though it has seen steady population growth since 1950 when the population was 702 persons. The 2000 population of 1,535 is almost a 23% increase over the 1990 population of 1,252. *“Projections from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments anticipate continued growth in the Village reaching a total of nearly 1,700 residents in the year 2020, although limited developable land in the Village may preclude such continued growth.”* (Page 31)

It should be noted that since the time the Ortonville draft master plan was completed in mid-March, SEMCOG has released a new version of its Regional Development Forecast. This forecast looks at population projections to the year 2035 as compared to the 2030 forecast used in the draft plan. The new forecast shows a 2020 population for Ortonville to be 1,575, compared to the 1,696 previously forecasted for 2020 and cited in the draft master plan. This lower rate of growth continues to the year 2035 where the forecast shows a population of 1,631. It is recommended that before the master plan is adopted, these new numbers be included in the plan.

In terms of land use, 48.1% of Ortonville is in a residential use, consisting of single family homes, small multiple family dwellings, and a few apartments. Between 1980 and 2007, 180 dwelling units were built, of which almost 23% were renter occupied. A small number of multiple family parcels are scattered throughout the Village.

Vacant land is the next highest land use with 11.6% of total land area (73 acres). The largest area of vacant land is on the north side of Mill, east of Church Street, although a limited number of vacant parcels are located throughout the Village. Village lots are currently served by individual on-site sewage disposal systems or septic systems. Due to higher densities in the older parts of the Village, small lot sizes, high groundwater table, soil conditions, and proximity to drinking water wells, some parts of the Village are experiencing failing septic systems. One of the limiting factors to new development, especially for the downtown, will be the availability of sanitary sewer service. The plan examines four options: do nothing, community septic systems, regional treatment plant, or local treatment plant. While no particular option is recommended, *“Ultimately, adequate sewer service is a necessity for the Village of Ortonville.”* (Page 56)

The amount of public/institutional land mirrors the amount of vacant land with 11.3% of total land area. By far, the two largest public/institutional parcels are occupied by Brandon Schools (Intermediate and Elementary schools). Other major public uses in the Village include the Brandon Township Office Building, Brandon Township Hall, Village Offices, and Brandon Township Public Library; municipal offices of both the Township and Village are conveniently located within the downtown.

Street right-of-way makes up 10.5% of total land area. M-15 (Ortonville Road) is a regional arterial that goes through the far western part of the Village and handles approximately 17,100 vehicles per day. Oakwood and Granger Roads delineate the north and south boundaries of the Village respectively and are under the jurisdiction of the Road Commission for Oakland County. Access off M-15 into the Village is mainly from either South Street or Mill Street, both Village

streets as are all the other roads and streets in the Village. A separate Circulation Plan classifies the various roadways in the Village and summarizes some of road improvements identified in the M-15 Access Management Plan. These are mainly intersection improvements along M-15 at Granger Road, South Street, and Mill Street—the three locations where most of the vehicle crashes take place. Pedestrian circulation also is important in the Village and five-foot wide sidewalks are recommended for all streets in the Village. In addition, the plan envisions future connections to a regional pathway system allowing for non-motorized connections to the Ortonville State Recreation Area and the Holly State Recreation Area.

Commercial and office uses are primarily located along M-15 or in the downtown, which is centered at the intersection of Mill and South Street. Ortonville has a traditional downtown with two-story historic buildings. Unfortunately, due to fires in the past, some of these buildings have been lost. The plan gives a lot of attention to building design guidelines to illustrate the type of infill construction that would be appropriate for the downtown. New buildings should have zero lot line construction bringing them up to the sidewalk. They should be two stories and constructed of long lasting materials like brick or stone.

Only 1% of total land area is in industrial use. Industrial is confined to the northwest corner of the Village off Narrin Road, adjacent to Groveland Township.

The Village has 55 acres (8.7% of land area) devoted to recreation and conservation uses. The largest site, Ortonville Village Park, is on the south side of Mill, east of Church Street. The plan includes a Natural Features map based on information available from Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services. There are two Priority Two sites in the Village of Ortonville but no Priority One (highest) or Priority Three sites. Priority sites are sites with potential significance due to the natural features present. The Ortonville Village Park contains a large area of wetlands and woodlands, as well as the Kearsley Creek. The other Priority Site is in the far southwestern corner of the Village surrounding Duck Creek. Most of that site is currently vacant.

Given the historic nature of Ortonville, the Historic Preservation chapter is a welcome addition to the plan. *“Residents have identified Ortonville’s historic charm as one of the most important attributes that they would like to see preserved as their community grows.”* (Page 57) A photo inventory of potentially significant structures is presented as a first step in identifying historic structures or those that may need further research. Forty-one buildings were surveyed; the completed historic preservation survey forms will be included in the appendix. Historic structures are concentrated in four areas: Mill Street Commercial District, Mill Street Residential Area, Residential Area north of Mill Street, and South Street Residential Area. Preparing design guidelines or designating a local historic district are possible next steps to help property owners properly preserve and restore the tangible parts of the Village’s past.

The plan includes goals and objectives related to downtown development, residential development, nonresidential development, walkability, community image, transportation, community facilities, natural resources, and planning and community development. The master plan concludes with a chapter on implementation. Future actions to implement the plan fall into four broad categories: planning and zoning, civic improvements, circulation improvements, and economic development. Charts have been prepared for each of these categories to identify future

projects and their associated priority, timeframe, responsibility, and funding. An assessment is provided of various economic development tools that could be used to help implement some of these projects, such as the Downtown Development Authority, Corridor Improvement Authority, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, Principal Shopping District/Business Improvement District, Commercial Rehabilitation Act, and Local Development Financing Authority.

Future Land Use Map

The visual representation of the Village's policies is shown on the Future Land Use map (attached). Ortonville uses a unique approach for this map. Photos that capture the character of that district are used as the legend for the future land use classifications. An additional chart showing appropriate building types provides further guidance on the type of character the Village is trying to create in each district. The chart addresses access and entry, off-street parking, garages, and exposure to light and air for both residential and non-residential building types to ensure that new and infill development is compatible with the existing character found in the Village.

Most of the Village is planned for residential use with four residential classifications shown on the map. All four of the residential classifications also allow institutional uses such as churches, schools, and municipal buildings but these uses should be restricted to corner sites. The Single Family Residential classification represents those areas of the Village where newer housing has been built. Minimum lot sizes are 15,000 square feet. Single Family Residential is mostly found in the eastern half of the Village.

Village Residential represents the older, more established historic neighborhoods. Lot sizes are smaller with a minimum lot size of 12,000 square feet. Most of the Village Residential is located in the northwest corner of the Village but a small area also is located to the southwest of the downtown.

Mixed Residential is a new classification that allows for both single family attached and detached units. Townhouses would be an appropriate development type for the Mixed Residential classification although the plan does stipulate a maximum of 40% of all units may be attached. The maximum density allowed is 6 units per acre. The only area planned for Mixed Residential is a large area to the east of Church Street on the north side of Mill that is mainly vacant.

Multiple Family Residential is confined to two locations on the Future Land Use map. One location is at Mill and Narrin Road near the western edge of the Village; the other location is on Granger Road at Woodbridge Lane on the southern border with Brandon Township. A maximum density of 10 units per acre is allowed in the Multiple Family Residential district.

Several different Commercial, Office, and Industrial classifications are shown on the Future Land Use map. The following designations are used:

1. Gateway
2. Downtown
3. Corridor Commercial
4. Workplace

As the downtown is the central focus of the Village, the approaches to it are treated in a special fashion. Gateway uses are intended for the entryways to the downtown from South Street and from the western part of Mill Street. This classification allows for a mixture of residential, small scale multiple family (2-4 dwelling units within a building that has a single family residential character), office, and light commercial. Uses that generate large amounts of traffic as well as drive-through uses are to be discouraged in this part of the Village.

The Downtown, centered at the intersection of South Street and Mill, is the heart of the Village and should contain buildings appropriate to the scale of the historic fabric. A mixed use atmosphere is promoted that would allow for residential, commercial, office, and municipal uses in a walkable setting. *“Senior housing in particular is encouraged as a residential land use in the Downtown area.”* (Page 6)

The Commercial Corridor classification is restricted to the portion of M-15 within the Village. The M-15 corridor allows for more automobile oriented uses. Here commercial and office uses that generate more traffic or contain drive-through facilities are appropriate uses.

Workplace is a new classification name for a combination of commercial, office, and light industrial uses that do not generate a large volume of traffic. The Workplace classification is confined to that portion of Narrin Road north of Myron at the western edge of the Village, adjacent to Groveland Township.

The last two classifications on the Future Land Use map are Public and Natural Preserve. Two large areas of Public are to the east of M-15 and represent school property. Natural preserve areas contain significant natural features and are unsuitable for building development but can support park and conservation use. A large area of Natural Preserve is shown south of Mill Street. The Kearsley Creek flows through this site, the Ortonville Village Park. Two other areas of Natural Preserve are shown on the Future Land Use map. One is off Oakwood Road at the northern border with Brandon Township; the other is in the southwestern corner of the Village adjacent to Groveland Township.

Downtown Plans

The master plan defines the role of Downtown Ortonville. *“Downtown is not, and should not try to be a contemporary retail hub for everyday life...Because of the Village’s historic character and critical mass of historic buildings, Downtown is better suited to serve niche markets, to position itself as a destination downtown.”* (Page 22)

With this in mind, the plan contains two alternatives for future downtown development. One alternative is based on sanitary sewer service being provided to the downtown while the other alternative shows basically the status quo without sewers. With no sewer service provided, the plan acknowledges that no new buildings can be accommodated. This will be especially limiting to any new dining establishments that wish to locate in Downtown Ortonville. Both plans show sidewalks throughout the downtown as well as a new plaza or gathering space at the end of South Street with some architectural feature that terminates the view from South Street. This plaza will necessitate the construction of a new access drive to the Brandon Township offices. Alternative B: With Sanitary Sewer Service identifies locations for new buildings along both

South Street and Mill. New infill buildings, especially along Mill, will reinforce the pedestrian scale by filling in “gaps” that currently exist in the downtown fabric. By providing sanitary sewer, there would be opportunities for new entertainment and dining uses that could enhance Ortonville’s desire to become a destination downtown.

Comparison of the draft 2008 Future Land Use Map to the 1980 Map

The draft map has six classifications that have direct counterparts on the 1980 map. They are Single Family Residential, Multiple Family Residential, Downtown, Corridor Commercial, Public, and Natural Preserve. However, there have been changes to the other classifications used. The draft map adds two new residential classifications, Village Residential, to reflect the historic neighborhoods surrounding the downtown, and Mixed Residential that allows a range of densities between Single Family and Multiple Family. The new Gateway classification is intended to preserve and enhance the historic character of the two main entrance roads leading from M-15 to the downtown. The Office classification from the 1980 map is not used on the new map, but office uses are allowed in the Gateway, Downtown, Corridor Commercial, and Workplace classifications. The new Workplace classification contains provisions for uses allowed in the Light Industrial classification on the 1980 map as well as some Commercial, Office, and Service uses.

The new Gateway classification along Mill and South Streets from M-15 to the downtown replaces the Single and Multiple Family Residential, Office, Highway Commercial, and Open Space and Recreation classifications used on the 1980 map. On the west side of M-15 at Narrin Road, Open Space and Recreation has been changed to Corridor Commercial and farther to the south, an area of Highway Commercial is now Natural Preserve. In the downtown, areas classified Community Facilities, Single Family Residential, and Open Space and Recreation on the 1980 map have been changed to the Downtown classification on the draft map. Also, a large tract of land north of Varsity and west of Edwards (part of a school site) has been changed from Open Space and Recreation to Public.

There have been several changes to the Residential classifications in the Village. Areas of Open Space and Recreation and Community Facilities along the east side of Edwards at Varsity, and a portion of Downtown Commercial east of Church Street have been changed to Single Family Residential. In the northwest quadrant, areas of Single Family Residential, Light Industry, and Open Space and Recreation have been incorporated into the new Village Residential classification. However, the biggest changes have taken place in the northeast portion of the Village. Here, a large area north of Mill Street between Church and Village Court has been changed from Single and Multiple Family Residential to the new Mixed Residential classification while the extreme northeast portion of the Village has changed from Multiple to Single Family Residential.

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. The following provides detail on how the draft plan coordinates with each of Ortonville’s neighboring communities.

West Boundary-Groveland Township: The Groveland Township Master Plan for Future Land Use was adopted in May 2005. Ortonville shares its entire western border with Groveland Township. Groveland Township has planned for Center and Non-center Commercial along M-15, north of Grange Hall Road (Mill Road in the Village). Ortonville has planned this border for Village Residential, Workplace, and Corridor Commercial. The planned Center Commercial in Groveland Township is an existing shopping center adjacent to an existing home in the Village. The Workplace and Corridor Commercial uses are compatible with the commercial uses in the Township.

South of M-15 and Grange Hall Road, Groveland Township has planned for Non-center Commercial at Grange Hall Road, then Single Family (1 acre lot minimum size) and Recreation and Open Space. Along this border, Ortonville has planned for Corridor Commercial and Natural Preserve. In this location, much of the M-15 frontage has been developed in the Village but there are still some vacant residential parcels in the Township. Due to the depth of the commercial parcels in the Village, there should be sufficient opportunities to buffer new residential development in Groveland Township.

North, East and South Boundary-Brandon Township: The Brandon Township Future Land Use Plan was adopted in March 2000. The Village shares its entire northern, eastern, and southern borders with Brandon Township. The Township has planned this entire border (except the extreme southwest portion along M-15) for Rural Residential-Agricultural (2.5 acre minimum lot size), Low Density Single Family Residential (1 acre minimum), and Medium Density Single Family Residential (20,000 square foot lots). The map notes that Medium Density Single Family Residential refers to existing uses only and is not available until sewers are present to allow for this density. In Ortonville, nearly this entire border is planned for very compatible, Single Family and Village Residential or Natural Preserve uses. The one exception is an existing small multiple family development on the southern border of the Village that is adjacent to existing Medium Density Single Family Residential in the Township.

At M-15, Brandon Township has planned for Commercial (Office Retail) with Industrial behind the western frontage of commercial. In Ortonville, the M-15 frontage is planned for Corridor Commercial with a small area of Natural Preserve to the west. It appears from the 2006 aerial that the industrial parcel in the Township is underutilized. If the use on the parcel is expanded, care should be taken to minimize any impact on the forested wetlands that appear to extend from this parcel into Ortonville and Groveland Township.

Analysis

It has been 28 years since the Village of Ortonville has updated its plan. It should be noted that Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services (PEDS) Staff assisted the Village of Ortonville in preparing the Request for Proposals for a new Master Plan and in selecting the consultant. The resultant master plan appears to have the strong downtown and historic preservation focus that was desired by the Village. Special attention was given to the downtown in the plan, and a separate Downtown Plan was prepared that evaluates opportunities for growth under the status quo or the sanitary sewer alternative. The Historic Preservation chapter documents the work done by the Historic Preservation consultant and contains substantial research for the Village to use if it decides to proceed with a local historic district.

In addition, the plan provides design guidance. Photographs contained in the plan help property owners and developers understand what Village officials are looking for in terms of future development. In particular, the summary of building types chart and the downtown building design guidelines describe appropriate building character. The plan indicates the need to develop more detailed architectural design standards for the downtown and M-15, as well as historic building design guidelines. PEDS Staff agrees that providing this additional design assistance is crucial to ensure that infill development does not destroy the historic character that makes Ortonville special. The Main Street Oakland County Program and Historic Preservation Program are two resources that the Village should tap as they work on this aspect of downtown development and historic preservation.

Another strong aspect of the plan is the implementation strategy. Specific activities are listed under each of the four categories of planning and zoning, civic improvements, economic development, and circulation improvements. Activities are listed by priority so the most important are listed first. Timeframes to accomplish these projects appear realistic with many items listed in the one to three year timeframe. The agency or group with the lead responsibility is listed first but, as important, key participants and contributors also are noted. These charts provide an excellent implementation framework for the Village to follow. To be most effective, it is recommended that the Planning Commission revisit the implementation strategy annually to review the progress being made and adjust as needed.

Conclusion

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services Staff commends the Village of Ortonville for preparing this new Master Plan. This is a well-done master plan that should guide the Village into the future.

Based on the review of the surrounding communities' master plans, the Ortonville Master Plan 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
Enclosures