

July 11, 2008

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

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 08-08, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of Master Plan for Future Land Use Amended 2008 for Groveland Township

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The Groveland Township Planning Commission has prepared an amendment to its 2005 Master Plan to replace its Commercial and Industrial Areas chapter and to add a new chapter on Parks and Recreation. The following is a review and analysis of the proposed changes.

Under the amendments to the Township Planning Act, which took effect December 20, 2006, Groveland Township 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. While our 40-day comment period does not expire until August 11, the July 22, 2008 Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee (CZC) meeting is the only meeting that falls within the 40-day period. Neighboring communities also have 40 days to submit comments directly to Groveland Township and are asked to send a copy of any comments to the County as well. After the comment period has expired on August 11, the Groveland Township Planning Commission can hold a public hearing and take final action to amend the plan.

According to the Groveland Township Planning Commission Chair, the Townships of Atlas, Brandon, Grand Blanc, Holly, Independence, Rose, and Springfield as well as the Village of Ortonville were sent a copy of the draft plan. Additionally, Consumer's Energy, Enbridge Energy, CELLO Partnership (Verizon Cordless), Buckeye Pipeline Company, DTE, and SEMOC were also sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these communities, agencies, and utilities have received notice of the CZC meeting. Since Groveland Oaks County Park is in Groveland Township, County staff also sent a copy of the amendment to Oakland County Parks and Recreation. No comments were received as of July 11, 2008.

Public Participation Process

The amendment notes that Township officials, residents, and property owners participated in the preparation of the report through several study meetings conducted by the Planning Commission.

Amendment Contents

The amendment consists of five sections: Acknowledgements; Introduction; Commercial and Industrial Areas; Parks and Recreation; and Plan Implementation. In essence, the amendment contains three main items. First, the Commercial and Industrial Areas chapter that covered pages 31-42 of the 2005 Master Plan is replaced with the Commercial and Industrial Areas chapter that

is part of the amendment. Only a limited amount of new text has been added to this chapter. Secondly, a brand new chapter addressing Parks and Recreation has been added to the master plan. Finally, an amended Master Plan for Future Land Use map has been included that contains new classifications in the legend that are also reflected on the map.

In terms of commercial areas, the 2005 master plan used three classifications: Office, Center Commercial, and Non-Center Commercial. No changes are proposed for the Office portion of the text. Center Commercial refers to larger sites where a planned commercial or shopping center could be accommodated. These areas relate to the B-2, Community Business Zoning District where greater setbacks and larger off-street parking areas are required. The two areas planned for Center Commercial have not changed with this amendment. One area has an existing shopping center on the parcel (at M-15 and Oakwood adjacent to the Village of Ortonville) while the other, larger site on Dixie Highway at Grange Hall Road is not developed. No changes were made to this classification in the text except to delete references to big box retailers.

The bulk of the changes relate to the Non-Center Commercial classification. The plan indicates that this classification is for “*commercial land use that would not fit into the Center Commercial land use category.*” (Page 6) The 2005 master plan text indicated that Non-Center Commercial related to either the B-1, Neighborhood Business Zoning District, or the B-3, General Business Zoning District. B-1 uses are less intense commercial uses designed to serve the immediate neighborhood while B-3 uses cater to a larger, community-wide base and to passerby traffic. The determination of which zoning district was most appropriate would be based on surrounding land uses and whether the use could be a lower-intensity transitional use adjacent to single family residential. This same criteria is still used in the amendment but the Non-Center Commercial classification now has been subdivided into two classifications to explicitly indicate whether Local Neighborhood Commercial or General Commercial is allowed. The master plan map also shows these two new sub-classifications. The amendment describes six separate areas planned for Non-Center Commercial on the future land use map. Each location is examined in detail and an explanation is given why the specific sub-classification was chosen. Unique development considerations for each area are also described that include buffering, non-conforming uses, and the timing of proposed development.

In terms of industrial areas, the 2005 master plan used three classifications: Light Industrial, General Industrial, and Technical Research. The only change proposed in Industrial is the addition of “or Mixed Use” to the Technical Research classification. Two fairly large areas are planned for Technical Research. These areas are at I-75 and Grange Hall Road and at I-75 and the southern Township border, north of the East Holly Road interchange in Springfield Township. Both of these sites are currently being mined and are not yet available for redevelopment. Based on existing permits, the mining operations are expected to begin reclamation between 2010 and 2014. The permits require that reclamation be completed within two years from the time the mining operations cease. The addition of “Mixed Use” relates to current economic conditions. “*Due to the static economic climate in Michigan in 2008 the potential for large signature type technical research businesses developing on former mining sites in the Township, has diminished. Entrepreneurial interest in the mining sites is now turning towards large mixed use developments.*” (Page 15)

The new chapter on Parks and Recreation follows Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (MDNR) guidelines for a parks and recreation plan. Normally Parks and Recreation plans are stand alone documents that are submitted to MDNR to make the community eligible for recreation funding. Groveland Township does not intend to request any funding at this time nor does it have an official Parks and Recreation Commission. However, this first Township Parks and Recreation Plan does provide a good inventory of the recreational facilities within its borders and looks at connectivity between recreational areas. Groveland Township has almost 30% of its land area in some type of recreation/conservation use. This includes over 5,400 acres of Holly State Recreation Area and the 361-acre Groveland Oaks County Park.

Specific recreation goals and objectives are included. An action plan identifies actions the Township can take in the next five years. Regarding Groveland Oaks, the plan recommends that the Township "*continue to support the park's seasonal swimming program.*" (Page 26)

The Master Plan for Future Land Use map reflects the changes made in the text. The legend breaks out Non-Center Commercial into Local Neighborhood Commercial and General Commercial; these two sub-classifications are depicted on the map. The Technical Research classification has been renamed in the legend to Technical Research or Mixed Use. The proposed County Pathway system has been added to the map as well.

Comparison of the draft 2008 Future Land Use map to the 2005 map

In addition to the classification changes described above, several other changes on the future land use map were observed. First, three "parcels" on the east side of Dixie Highway, south of Lahring Road changed from Non-Center Commercial to Rural Estate Farm. These parcels are now planned consistent with the large, adjacent parcel to the east that is also planned for Rural Estate Farm. Two of these parcels are referenced in the plan as land locked; however, that is not the case. Property lines have changed since 2003, which is the year of the base map used in the amendment. Since then these land locked parcels became part of the larger parcel to the east.

Groveland Township also changed several parcels along the western boundary shared with Holly Township, north of Grange Hall Road, from Non-Center Commercial to Technical Research or Mixed Use. With this change, the entire mining operation north of Grange Hall Road at I-75 is planned for Technical Research or Mixed Use, which could facilitate a larger, planned development during the reclamation process.

Also, an area on the west side of Dixie Highway, immediately north of Standing Pines Drive has been changed from Office to General Commercial. Because these parcels are currently single family residential, when this area begins to convert to a commercial use, consideration for the existing homes must be taken. During the site plan review process, attention to access, buffering, and landscaping will be required to minimize possible impacts of the commercial uses on the 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 amendment is "inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township" that received notice of the draft amendment. Since coordination with all the surrounding community

boundaries was reviewed when the 2005 plan was submitted for comment, the following only looks at changes within this amendment. Other than the Non-Center Commercial Areas being further classified to either Local Neighborhood Commercial or General Commercial and the addition to Technical Research, there are only two land use changes along a boundary.

West Boundary – Holly Township: The Holly Township Master Plan was adopted in November 2003. Groveland Township shares its entire western border with Holly Township. There is only one future land use change along this border. Roughly 15 acres on the north side of Grange Hall Road at I-75 that were planned for Non-Center Commercial in the 2005 Master Plan are now planned for Technical Research or Mixed Use. The I-75 interchange separates this area from the Commercial/Office on the north side of Grange Hall Road in Holly Township. The change in classification should have minimal effect as the addition of Mixed Uses could still allow for commercial uses to be developed along the frontage.

South Boundary – Springfield Township: The Springfield Township Master Plan was adopted in March 2002. Groveland Township shares its entire southern border with Springfield Township. There is only one future land use change along this border. An area at the northeast corner of Wildwood and Oakhill Roads that was previously planned for Rural Estate Farms has been changed to Non-Center Commercial, General Business. A small portion of this parcel extends south to the border with Springfield Township. Springfield Township has planned this border for Office-Service and Medium Density Residential. The change in classification should have minimal effect.

Analysis

This amendment provides some new information for incorporation into the Groveland Township Master Plan while refining other parts of the plan. Non-Center Commercial areas are now explicitly identified for either Local Neighborhood or General Commercial use. This clarification should help property owners and residents have a better understanding of how these commercial areas can develop in the future. The addition of Mixed Use to Technical Research broadens opportunities for property owners to accommodate future economic market conditions. The ability to develop these areas with a mixture of commercial, office, technical research, and even residential uses will allow more flexibility and is a good economic development strategy for the Township. Because both of the Technical Research or Mixed Use areas are large sites at the border with neighboring communities (Holly and Springfield Township), the redevelopment of these mining sites has the potential to have impacts beyond Groveland Township's borders. Groveland Township should work with the adjacent communities when any large-scale development is proposed to ensure land use compatibility. Traffic impacts, access, landscaping, and buffering will be topics of mutual concern.

The Parks and Recreation chapter is a welcome addition to the Groveland Township Master Plan. Nearly 30% of the Township is in a recreation or conservation use. Environmental Stewardship staff from Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services (PEDS) worked with Groveland Township officials to prepare the Green Infrastructure vision. Some of the graphics used in the amendment were prepared by our office as well. Groveland Township has a wealth of natural areas, many of which are large areas of high natural resource quality. The intent behind green infrastructure is to identify connections between green spaces for wildlife

habitat, ecological functions, and recreation. The Green Infrastructure map shows the location of public and private lands that can contribute to this interconnected network. The text describes how designing open space in one cluster residential development to be adjacent to preserved open space in another development adds to this interconnected network. The Technical Research or Mixed Use sites can possibly contribute to this system as well. They are shown on this map as “Other Restoration Links”. Depending on how these sites are developed, some clustering may be possible to leave large areas open and available for natural vegetation restoration. Noting this in the Commercial and Industrial Areas chapter will help the reader make the connection with this Green Infrastructure graphic.

One point mentioned in the Parks and Recreation chapter is the closure of a private camp (Camp Gordonwood). While the local school district may purchase this camp, the plan should address the future use of private recreational sites in case there is a change of ownership in the future.

Finally, regarding the Master Plan for Future Land Use map, the base map used is from 2003. As noted in the review, the plan mentions (on page 9) land locked parcels that no longer exist. Oakland County maintains an updated digital parcel fabric that is supplied to communities and their consultants at no charge. We recommend that Groveland Township take advantage of this information and update the base map that is the foundation of the Future Land Use map. Other parcel changes since 2003 will be reflected allowing property owners to more accurately identify their property.

Conclusion

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff commends Groveland Township for reviewing its plan and identifying areas that need to be updated.

Based on the review of the surrounding communities’ master plans, Master Plan for Future Land Use Amended 2008 Groveland Township 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,

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Principal Planner

Enclosure