

September 2, 2008

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

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 08-10, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of Springfield Township Master Plan (Draft dated July 10, 2008)

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The Springfield Township Planning Commission has updated its 2002 Master Plan. The following is a review and analysis of the proposed new plan.

Under the recent amendments to the Township Planning Act, which took effect December 20, 2006, Springfield 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 63 days to submit comments on a draft plan. The September 9, 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 Springfield Township 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 Springfield Township Planning Commission Secretary, Brandon, Groveland, Highland, Holly, Independence, Rose, Waterford, and White Lake Townships; Detroit Edison, Consumers Energy, Michigan Gas Storage, Michigan Bell Telephone Company, Canadian National Railway; and SEMCOG were sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these communities, utilities, and agencies were sent a notice of the CZC meeting. It should be noted that the letter to Michigan Gas Storage was returned as unable to deliver. Since Springfield Oaks County Park is located in Springfield Township, County staff also sent a copy of the Future Land Use map and other pertinent pages to Oakland County Parks and Recreation. No comments were received.

Public Participation Process

When the master plan was revised in 2002, Springfield Township undertook an extensive citizen participation process, including a Vision Fair and two Focus Group meetings. *“Because this document is considered an update rather than a wholesale revision, much of the 2008 Master Plan is based on input gathered when drafting the previous plan. This update was prepared by the Planning Commission with input from the Township Board.”* (Page 22)

Plan Contents

The Plan is divided into five chapters: Introduction, History of Planning and Zoning, Background Studies Summary, Public Participation, and Master Plan. The Master Plan chapter consists of Goals and Policies, Future Land Use Plan, Transportation Plan, Natural Areas Plan, and Planning Concepts by Sub-Area. More detailed inventory and background data is in the Appendix, along with a glossary of terms.

The Background Studies Summary indicates some of the changes that have occurred in Springfield Township, a rural township in northwestern Oakland County. In 1990 the population

of Springfield Township was 9,927. In 2000, the Census showed the population had increased by 34% to 13,338. According to SEMCOG projections, the 2035 population is projected to increase to 16,145, a 21% increase over 2000. It should be noted that the 2035 population number cited in the master plan is slightly different than the published 2035 SEMCOG projection for Springfield Township of 16,325. *“Springfield Township does not necessarily endorse or agree with SEMCOG’s projections.”* (Page 13)

In terms of land use, Springfield Township is mainly a low-density single family community with significant areas devoted to recreation-conservation use. The majority of the homes are fairly new. The 2000 Census shows 74% of the housing units have been built since 1970. Residential land use has increased since the 2000 Census, as the plan indicates 526 building permits have been issued between 2001 and 2007. According to the 2007 land use inventory prepared by the consultant, 49% of Springfield Township is in a single family residential use. Land is still available for development as 13% of the Township is considered vacant; 9% is in an agricultural use.

While only 1% of land is in a commercial/office use, the plan indicates that current and planned commercial land is adequate. The plan contains a Commercial Market Analysis that looks at current and projected population and the resultant demand for commercial land. The analysis concludes that approximately 81 acres of commercial land are needed in 2007; the amount increases to 106 acres by 2035. Currently, there are 249 acres of commercially zoned land, so the Township has adequately provided for this land use. The majority of this commercial development will be located along Dixie Highway.

The other main roadway in Springfield Township is I-75 that traverses the Township in a northwest-southeast direction that parallels Dixie Highway. There are two interchanges located in Springfield Township, both at the extreme edges of the Township. One is at East Holly Road in the northern part of the Township near Groveland Township. The other is at Dixie Highway on the eastern edge with Independence Township.

Twenty percent (20%) of the Township is in a recreation and open space use consisting of recreation, conservation, and privately dedicated open space. Natural resources contribute greatly to the character of Springfield Township. *“The Township contains the watersheds of four major rivers-the Huron, Shiawassee, Clinton and Flint Rivers-and the headwaters of the first three. Extensive wetland systems, especially associated with river corridors, are also significant features throughout the Township.”* (Page 19) The desire to plan with these resources in mind is embodied in a set of 22 policies that address natural resources, historic preservation, residential land use, community services, recreation, transportation, and commercial, industrial, office, and mixed-use development. The underlying philosophy for the policies is that development should be based on the natural capability of the land to support it. Where there are sensitive natural resources, inadequate roads, and a resource base least capable of supporting development, land use should be of a low density nature. Higher density development is only allowed where the resource base supports higher intensity uses, where the road system is more developed, and where there is an existing pattern of higher intensity uses. These 22 policies remain unchanged from the 2002 plan.

Future Land Use Plan Map

The visual representation of these policies is shown on the Future Land Use Plan map (attached). Springfield Township is planning for primarily low to medium density residential land use. There are six residential classifications listed on the map:

1. Low Density Residential – One dwelling unit per 2.5 acres or greater.
2. Medium Density Residential – One dwelling unit per one to two acres.
3. High Density Residential – One dwelling unit per ½ to one acre.
4. Traditional Lakefront Residential – existing smaller lots around lakes reflecting platting that occurred prior to current zoning regulations.
5. Multiple Family Residential – density ranging from four to eight units per acre depending upon site conditions and unit size.
6. Mobile Home Park – reflects existing mobile home parks.

South and west of I-75 is mainly planned for Low Density Residential and Recreation-Conservation, while Medium Density Residential is mainly planned for north and east of I-75. Medium Density Residential also is planned in the southeast corner of the Township. These Low and Medium Density Single Family classifications account for 68% of the future planned land uses in the Township.

This low-density orientation is consistent with the lack of utilities in the Township. Development in Springfield Township relies exclusively on septic systems and wells. The only areas served by a communal sewage system are a few of the existing mobile home parks and higher density condominium projects. This explains the small number of sites planned for High Density Residential. *“Therefore, most areas designated under this category are existing high density residential developments that are served by limited existing sewer and water service. Where new areas are designated, the determining factor regarding density will be on-site septic system capability.”* (Page 46)

The other significant land use planned in Springfield Township is recreation, conservation, and open space. The two classifications of Recreation-Conservation and Privately Dedicated Open Space account for 22% of the future planned land uses in the Township. The Recreation-Conservation classification includes the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority’s Indian Springs Metro Park, Oakland County’s Springfield Oaks Park, Springfield Township’s Shiawassee Basin Preserve, and several private golf courses. Areas of Privately Dedicated Open Space have expanded on this map compared to the 2002 map indicating the increased use of the cluster housing option. A network of linked open space is starting to develop through the use of this option, which is encouraged by Springfield Township to preserve open space and wildlife habitat.

High intensity uses like commercial, office, mixed use, and industrial are planned to comprise only 3.9% of future land uses. Commercial development, both Local Commercial and General Cluster Commercial, is concentrated along Dixie Highway, primarily south of Davisburg Road. The Township is not planning for strip commercial along this main roadway but is more interested in cluster commercial where larger sites will support shopping centers or grouped buildings. Planned Mixed Use is the other major classification planned along this stretch of Dixie Highway. This classification allows for a mixture of uses, such as commercial, office, business support services, industrial, research, and public that would *“create a dynamic environment.”* General Cluster Commercial and Planned Mixed Use are planned for the I-75/East Holly Road interchange in the northern part of the Township adjacent to Groveland

Township. The small hamlet of Davisburg in the western part of the Township also is an area for mixed use. Davisburg is recognized as *“an identifiable core...that can serve an important function as a hub of activity.”* (Page 42)

There are three areas on the Future Land Use Plan map shown for Limited Industrial. Limited Industrial development is primarily located in the southeastern most corner of the Township (Andersonville and White Lake Road), with a smaller area planned farther north on Andersonville Road and one area along Dixie Highway south of Holly Road.

Transportation Plan

The master plan acknowledges that Springfield Township has no jurisdiction over the roads in the Township. However, this does not mean that the Township *“lacks responsibility over a number of factors that influence conditions along roadways.”* (Page 55) The master plan makes clear that there is a direct relationship between land use and road capacity. The transportation plan identifies the functional classification of roads in the Township. It also includes a Pathway Plan showing potential pedestrian and bike paths. Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff have prepared a conceptual trailways plan for northwestern Oakland County showing how state and county parks and other major open spaces could be linked together. This conceptual plan is illustrated on the Pathway Plan. *“In 2005, the Planning Commission created a “Priority Pathway Plan.” This plan identifies a subset of pathways throughout the community whose construction should take precedence over other identified pathways, and which will provide residents with the most benefits.”* (Page 60) Some of these “Priority Pathways” overlap with the conceptual county recreational trails.

The Transportation Plan concludes with a discussion on opportunities the Township has to influence roadways, such as access management (limiting the number and spacing of driveways) and traffic calming (measures to reduce speeds and improve pedestrian safety). Several policies also relate to transportation, including the continuation of gravel roads to maintain the rural character of the Township, maintaining tree canopied roads, and encouraging roadway aesthetics, especially along the Dixie Highway Corridor where a boulevard entryway at the eastern edge of the Township is envisioned.

Natural Areas Plan

The natural resource base of Springfield Township has been inventoried through several previous studies. The Township participated in the Shiawassee and Huron Headwaters Resource Preservation Project (S&H Project) with Oakland County and five adjacent communities. The S&H Project was a 2½ year study that looked at the natural resources in these communities that are at the headwaters of three river systems: the Huron, the Shiawassee, and the Clinton Rivers. Potentially significant natural areas were identified and several of these areas were field inventoried to determine their ecological makeup and significance. Three sites in Springfield Township were field inventoried as part of the study. Much of the ecological findings from the study have been incorporated into this master plan. The Natural Areas Plan shows the 24 potential natural areas identified through the S&H Project, existing recreational lands, and the remaining natural landscape fabric. The results of a 2007 Green Infrastructure Visioning session facilitated by Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff also are included on the Natural Areas Plan. This plan shows how these areas can be linked into a network of open space through greenway systems, wildlife connections, and utility corridors.

Comparison of the draft 2008 Future Land Use Plan to the 2002 map

The draft map uses the same classifications as the 2002 map with one addition. A new Utility Corridor classification has been added to represent two electric transmission corridors and associated facilities that traverse the northwest and southeast portions of the Township. These corridors were included in their adjacent land use classifications on the old map.

The two classifications that changed the most between the two maps are Recreation-Conservation and Privately Dedicated Open Space. Several large parcels in the central and northwestern portions of the Township were changed to Recreation-Conservation. The majority of these sites had been in a residential classification on the 2002 map, and are adjacent to larger tracts already planned for Recreation-Conservation. As noted, the increase in Privately Dedicated Open Space resulted from several new cluster residential developments that have significant portions set aside for open space.

Some new areas of Planned Mixed Use have been added to the draft map. At the Dixie Highway/I-75 interchange, a 32 acre church site has been changed from Public/Semi-Public to Planned Mixed Use. Just to the south, a large portion of the Colombiere Center/Shepherd's Hollow Golf Course property was changed from Recreation-Conservation to Planned Mixed Use. Finally, just south of Rattalee Lake Road, on the east side of Dixie Highway, a triangular piece of property that was formerly planned for Limited Industrial is now shown as Planned Mixed Use. However, the master plan text on page 52 still identifies this site as planned for industrial land use. This inconsistency between the map and text should be reconciled before the plan is adopted.

The following changes between the two maps also were noted. A large existing residential area west of Farley Road between Big Lake Road and Foster Road classified as Traditional Lakefront Residential on the 2002 map has been changed to High Density and Medium Density Residential on the draft map. Another residential area that has recently been developed on Holcomb Road immediately east of the Springfield Plains Elementary School has changed from Public/Semi-Public on the old map to Medium Density Residential on the draft map. Two parcels adjacent to the Heather Highlands Golf Course on Holly Road have been changed from Recreation-Conservation to General Cluster Commercial. In the southeast corner of the Township, the intersection of Andersonville Road and White Lake Road has changed from Limited Industrial to Local Commercial. Finally, several small changes have occurred in the Davisburg area as well.

Coordination with Surrounding Community Boundaries and County Property

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 Springfield Township's neighboring communities and with County property.

West Boundary - Rose Township: The Master Plan Rose Township was adopted in July 2005. Springfield Township shares its entire western boundary with Rose Township. Along this entire border, Springfield Township has planned for Low Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres), except for an area of Recreation-Conservation north of Davisburg Road (the Shiawassee Basin Preserve Park) and small areas of Privately Dedicated Open Space. Rose Township has this boundary planned for single family residential of varying densities. The border is mostly planned for Rural Preservation/Agriculture (1 dwelling unit/10 acres) and Rural Residential/Agriculture (1 dwelling unit/5 acres) with a small area of Estate Residential (1

dwelling unit/3 acres) along Davisburg Road. This is a very compatible border, although higher single family densities are planned in Springfield Township.

South Boundary – White Lake Township: The White Lake Township Master Plan was adopted in October 2006. Springfield Township shares its entire southern boundary with White Lake Township. Along its southern boundary, Springfield Township has planned (from west to east) Low Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres), Recreation-Conservation, Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/1 to 2 acres), Limited Industrial, and a small area of Local Commercial. In White Lake Township, its northwestern corner at White Lake and Eagle Roads is planned for Mobile Home. From this point east, White Lake Township has planned for Rural Estates (2 acre minimum lot size), Regional Parks and Open Space, then more Rural Estates both east and west of a larger site planned for Planned Commerce (light industrial, office, and research and development).

This border is fairly consistent. Residential densities are compatible, Indian Springs Metro Park extends across the boundaries of both communities, and the Planned Commerce in White Lake Township is adjacent to Limited Industrial and Local Commercial in Springfield Township. However, the extreme edges of this border are not identical in use. On the western edge, the Mobile Home designation represents an existing mobile home park developed under a consent judgment. On the eastern edge, the Rural Estates east of Cross Road is across from Limited Industrial in Springfield Township. It is recommended that as industrial uses are proposed along Old White Lake Road, attention be paid to setbacks, buffering, and landscaping to mitigate any impacts on the residential uses in White Lake Township.

East Boundary - Independence Township: The Independence Township Vision 2020 Master Plan was adopted in December 1999 and an update was prepared in 2007. This update (MP 07-05) is now awaiting adoption and is used for this coordination review. Springfield Township's eastern boundary is mainly planned for residential use. Low Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres) is planned from the northern boundary to Rattalee Lake Road. From there to Andersonville Road, Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/1 to 2 acres) is planned. Independence Township has planned for Rural Residential (1 dwelling unit/3 acres) from the northern Township line to Holcomb Road, and Estate Residential (1 dwelling unit/1½ acres) from Holcomb to I-75. This border area from the Townships' northern boundary to I-75 is fairly consistent in terms of single family residential densities.

South of I-75, along Dixie Highway, Independence Township has planned for Single Family Attached/Detached (maximum density of 4 units/acre) and Office Service. At this location, Springfield has a small area of Office-Service and Medium Density Residential.

South of this area, Independence has planned for Suburban Residential (1 dwelling unit/1 acre), Single Family Residential (15,000 square feet/dwelling unit), and Single Family Attached/Detached. At this location, Springfield Township has Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/1 to 2 acres). Finally, Independence Township has General Industrial at its southwestern corner. This is compatible with the Limited Industrial in Springfield Township's southeastern corner. The Independence/Springfield border is mainly compatible although higher residential densities are allowed in Independence Township due to the availability of sewer facilities.

North Boundary – Groveland Township: The Master Plan for Future Land Use Groveland Township was adopted in May 2005. An amendment to the plan was recently submitted to the Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee for review in July 2008 (MP 08-08). Along its northern border, Springfield Township has planned for Low Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres) to I-75. Groveland Township has planned for Rural Estate Farm (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres) from its western edge to I-75. The border to I-75 is completely compatible since the residential densities are the same.

To the east of I-75, Groveland Township has planned for Technical Research or Mixed Use. This is adjacent to General Cluster Commercial (just west of I-75), Planned Mixed Use, and Medium Density Residential in Springfield. The area east of I-75 is currently an extractive/mining site that extends across both Townships and presents a great opportunity for coordination. Officials from both Townships should be involved in the discussion regarding reclamation of the mining site. Coordination issues such as buffering, setback, and compatible future land uses could be discussed at that time. The recently proposed plan amendment by Groveland Township expands the Technical Research classification to allow for Mixed Use. This has the potential to make this area even more compatible as now mixed uses can be developed on either side of the border. This could be a key location for uses not currently existing in either Township. *“The East Holly Road/I-75 interchange is located in an area that could service, with careful planning, a broader market without impacting the balance of the Township, particularly current residential concentrations.”* (Page 131) It is recommended that both communities consider developing a joint sub-area plan to address future land uses and other issues of mutual concern for this location.

At Dixie Highway both communities plan more intensive uses. Groveland Township has Mobile Home Park and General Commercial planned west of Dixie Highway, and General Commercial and Multiple Family east of Dixie Highway. Springfield Township has Mobile Home Park and Local Commercial west of Dixie Highway and Office-Service east of Dixie Highway.

The remaining border is mainly compatible since both communities are planning for low density single family with a 2.5 acre minimum lot size. The one exception to this is an area of Single Family Residential (1 unit/acre) planned by Groveland Township closer to Dixie Highway.

County Property – Springfield Oaks County Park: Springfield Oaks County Park is located on the south side of Davisburg Road in western Springfield Township and is planned for Recreation-Conservation. It is generally surrounded by low intensity planned uses of Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, and Recreation-Conservation. As the park is in proximity to Davisburg, some Planned Mixed Use and High Density Residential are planned in the hamlet reflecting existing conditions. There is nothing planned near the County Park that would negatively impact it, and surrounding planned land uses are compatible.

Analysis

In 2002 when Springfield Township completed its Master Plan, Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff indicated that the plan was a model for environmental stewardship planning. Like that plan, this update places much emphasis on natural resource protection, habitat preservation, open space networks, native vegetation landscaping, and water quality efforts. The 22 policies that form the heart of this master plan provide guidance on the intensity of land use allowed based on the natural resource base.

Springfield Township has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources, such as wetlands, woodlands, grass lands, uplands, flood plains, steep slopes, and stream corridors. These resources have been studied over the years. The Shiawassee and Huron Headwaters Resource Preservation Project was a major source of information and revealed just how significant many of these resources are. Because of this, the Township has taken great care to ensure that development does not negatively impact high resource areas.

One tool adopted by the Township since the completion of the 2002 plan is the Resource Protection Overlay District. This zoning tool requires developers to undertake an ecological survey of their site if it contains a natural area identified by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory with a ranking of seven or above. Through this survey, the most significant and fragile areas of the site can be identified, and this knowledge allows the proposed development to be designed in such a way as to minimize impacts on the natural resource base. The Township has been particularly successful with having developers use the cluster option to permanently preserve significant natural areas while still allowing residential development to occur on the remainder of the site. Springfield Township's strong environmental ethic has not precluded development; it just has required development to be mindful of the important natural features present on the site. With this approach and the other strong ecological aspects of the plan, Springfield Township continues to be a leader in environmental protection.

Conclusion

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff commends Springfield Township for preparing this updated Master Plan.

Based on the review of the surrounding communities' master plans, Springfield Township Master Plan (Dated July 10, 2008) 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