

October 6, 2008

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

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 08-11, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the City of Pontiac Master Plan (Draft dated August 12, 2008)

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The City of Pontiac Planning Commission has prepared a new master plan to replace its 1991 Pontiac 2010 A New Reality. The following is a review and analysis of the proposed plan.

Under the amendments to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which took effect September 1, 2008, the City of Pontiac 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 October 14, 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 Pontiac 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 City's Planning Consultant, the Cities of Auburn Hills, Lake Angelus, and Sylvan Lake; Bloomfield and Waterford Townships; the Road Commission for Oakland County, Michigan Department of Transportation, Consumers Energy, DTE Energy, AT&T, CN Railroad; and SEMCOG were sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these communities, agencies, and utilities have received notice of the CZC meeting. Since the Oakland County Service Center is located within the City of Pontiac, Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff sent a copy of the Future Land Use Map and land use classifications to Oakland County Department of Facilities Management. Comments were received from the Oakland County Department of Facilities Management and the Michigan Department of Transportation and are attached.

Public Participation Process

Through citizen involvement, a vision statement for the City of Pontiac in the year 2027 was crafted. *"The visioning process included four public workshops with residents, meetings with the Master Plan Steering Committee, and sessions with the City of Pontiac Planning Commission to review all of the input and compile it into a single vision statement."* (Page 1)

Key elements of this vision include a vibrant downtown, housing choice, quality education, and public safety.

Plan Contents

The Plan consists of the following chapters: Goals and Objectives; Demographics; Existing Land Use; Parks and Natural Features; Transportation; Asset-Based Economic Development Strategy;

Future Land Use Policy; Future Land Use Plan; and Zoning Plan and Implementation. The Appendix contains a Summary of Public Participation. The full report on the Asset-Based Economic Development Strategy will be added to the Appendix but was not included in the draft copy.

Pontiac is centrally located in Oakland County and is the County Seat. Pontiac reached the height of its population in 1970 when its population was 85,279. Since then the population has steadily declined; the 2000 population was 66,337, a 22% decrease since 1970. Population projections cited in the plan show that the population should stabilize in the future. The plan lists a 2035 population projection of 64,461 (Source: SEMCOG). It should be noted that the 2035 population number cited in the master plan is slightly lower than the published 2035 SEMCOG projection for the City of Pontiac of 68,595.

The median age in Pontiac in 2000 was 30.0; this is lower than the Oakland County median age of 36.7. The largest age group in the City was the 18-44 year olds (42.9%). *“Pontiac has a lower percentage of population in their peak earning years (age 45-64) and retirement years (age 65 and older), indicating that residents may move out of Pontiac as they age.”* (Page 28)

In terms of land use, the City of Pontiac’s industrial base was largely developed through “Old Economy” industries. Large areas of the City were devoted to heavy manufacturing, primarily automotive related. Pontiac served as a job center for surrounding communities that were more residential in nature. The central feature of this master plan is to identify ways the City of Pontiac can transition to the New Economy and attract the knowledge workers of emerging industries. The Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University worked with the City and the Planning Consultant to develop an Asset-Based Economic Development Strategy that is the foundation of this master plan. The intent is to capitalize on the assets the City of Pontiac has to create a place where knowledge workers and young talented professionals want to be.

One of the major assets the City has is its historic downtown. However, the downtown functions more as an office center during the day and entertainment venue at night. The plan identifies the need for more mixed use development to bring in complementary uses, including a strong residential component to provide 24-hour vitality to the downtown. Currently, there are several large surface parking lots that could be redeveloped. The plan identifies Lot 9 (Saginaw and Pike Streets) and Lot 6 (Saginaw and Huron) as prime sites for mixed use development.

Another major asset is one that is mainly hidden from view. The Clinton River flows through the downtown but is conveyed through underground pipes. The river was buried years ago for flood control purposes. In recent years, the Oakland County Drain Commission and the City have been investigating the possibility of “daylighting” or bringing the river to the surface. *“The concept of “daylighting” the Clinton River has been discussed in Pontiac before, though it is typically dismissed as too far-fetched. In fact, a number of major cities have undertaken similar waterway restoration projects that have spurred new economic development along with the restoration.”* (Page 90) The possibility exists for the river to daylight through Lot 9 providing an exceptional opportunity to create an amenity for surrounding residential uses. With water views and an urban park space, Lot 9 could become a highly desirable residential and commercial/office location.

Another innovative concept mentioned in the plan is the reconfiguration of Woodward Avenue from a one-way loop around the downtown to two-way traffic. This concept was introduced in the 2001 Downtown Development Plan and is supported in this master plan as well. Commuter traffic would be concentrated on the western side of Woodward. *"The eastern portion of Woodward Avenue should be redeveloped as the Clinton River Parkway, a more local road that follows the restored Clinton River and redeveloped with new mixed-use buildings along the river that take advantage of this newly realized amenity."* (Page 92)

The plan identifies other Potential Intensity Change Areas (PICA), buildings or locations that have the potential to be redeveloped with an increase in their intensity or density of use. Some of the significant PICA are the Silverdome (large scale mixed use), GM Validation Center (community or regional retail center including "Big Box" and grocery stores), Collier Road Landfill (alternate energy production site such as solar and wind power), Kennett Road Landfill (recreation or light industrial), and Crystal Lake Public Housing site (mixed density residential development).

In order to attract the desired new residents, housing choices in the City must be expanded. Approximately 23% of Pontiac is currently in a single family residential use. In the plan, the City is divided into seven neighborhoods. An analysis of each neighborhood area is provided, comparing such statistics as household income, racial composition, housing occupancy, housing age, and housing value. *"The largest percentage of the City housing was constructed between 48 and 67 years ago, or between 1940 and 1959. Older housing requires more maintenance and possibly replacement after it reaches 50 years of age. Maintaining a vibrant and attractive housing stock will likely be one of the major issues facing the City in the upcoming years and decades."* (Pages 33 and 34) New housing types like live/work units and lofts are encouraged in selected areas.

Strengthening existing neighborhoods is of utmost importance as blight and vacant lots contribute to the negative character of many city neighborhoods. The plan identifies several tools that could be used to help stabilize the neighborhoods. A County Land Bank could assist with tax reverted properties while increased code enforcement could target blighted areas.

Increasing green space within the City is identified as another way to attract young professionals and improve the quality of life for existing residents. The plan supports the concept of urban agriculture, where vacant lots could be turned into community gardens. These vacant lots could also become part of an interconnected network of open space. The plan looks at existing parkland in the City. Using the national standard of 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents, Pontiac comes up short by almost 200 acres. Due to this analysis, the plan concludes that the City *should not* sell any of its existing parkland. The City should look for ways to increase recreational opportunities like completing the Clinton River Trail, a multi-use trail that would connect Pontiac to both Auburn Hills and Sylvan Lake/West Bloomfield. In addition, *"Public school playgrounds are an essential part of the recreation network and as schools are closed and property sold, replacing these neighborhood recreation opportunities should be a part of the redevelopment of these sites."* (Page 56)

The City hopes to establish itself as a leader in “green” practices. Incorporating stormwater best management practices is one approach. Another avenue for the City is adopting LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) guidelines for City buildings and providing incentives for developers to develop LEED certified projects.

Detailed goals and objectives provide specific activities the City should undertake to implement the plan. Goals and objectives have been prepared for the following topic areas: Residential; Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities; Development (Commercial, Industrial, Mixed-Use); Roads and Transportation; and Civic Center. Smart Growth principles were considered in the development of these goals and objectives. In addition, four overarching future land use goals are identified in the plan:

1. Encourage Mixed Uses
2. Strengthen Sense of Place
3. Improve Existing Housing Stock
4. Limit Strip Commercial Development

These goals are integrated throughout the plan’s narrative and should be considered whenever new development is proposed.

The plan concludes with a chapter on implementation. Action items identified throughout the plan are consolidated into a matrix showing the project, its importance, timeframe, public responsibilities, and funding opportunities. Actions relate to zoning ordinance amendments, green standards and infrastructure, economic development projects, planning projects, and other projects. Several amendments to the zoning ordinance will be necessary to allow for new future land use classifications described in the plan, and specific zoning ordinance changes are detailed in the chapter.

Future Land Use Map

The visual representation of the City’s policies is shown on the Future Land Use map (attached). While the City of Pontiac is planning for a variety of uses, there is a strong residential emphasis. Three residential classifications are listed on the map:

1. Low Density Residential – One to four dwelling units per acre.
2. Medium Density Residential – Five to eight dwelling units per acre.
3. Multiple Family Residential – Twelve to fifteen units per acre.

Historic Residential Districts are shown by dashed lines around the district. There are five separate historic districts and several historic sites in the City. *“The City should work with residents and professionals to develop a Historic Preservation Plan for each neighborhood. Furthermore, the City should work with Oakland County PEDS and the Historic Preservation Architect to develop brochures referencing the benefits of historic preservation, potential funding sources for restoration and repair as well as a list of additional information resources.”* (Page 116)

The majority of the residential areas are planned for Medium Density Residential. This classification covers most of the established neighborhoods in the City. As noted, many of these neighborhoods suffer from blight and include vacant lots. Encouraging infill development that complements the existing homes while allowing for flexibility is a key goal. Some of these

vacant lots may be able to be converted into urban gardens providing more green space for the neighborhood.

Low Density Residential is shown primarily on the perimeter of the City either at the northern or eastern edge. The one area of Low Density internal to the City is on the north side of Crystal Lake in the southwestern part of Pontiac. This is the location of the former public housing project that was demolished; the site is ready for redevelopment. *“This district is intended to be the most suburban in character, and is intended exclusively for detached single family dwelling units on larger lots. These developments should include ample open space accessible to members of the community.”* (Page 114)

Multiple Family Residential sites are scattered throughout the City, with several large areas located along Walton Boulevard in the northern part of the City. Apartments, senior citizen and assisted living facilities, and existing mobile home parks fall within this classification.

There are two classifications of Mixed Use shown on the map. A more traditional approach to mixed use is planned around the core downtown area to provide a transition between the outlying neighborhoods and the downtown. Here, a mixture of commercial and residential uses would be appropriate with commercial required on the ground floor. Most of these areas are smaller in scale although one large area of mixed use is planned for the Bloomfield Park project in southwestern Pontiac along Telegraph Road.

A second Mixed Use classification is shown for Transit Oriented Development. Pontiac is planning for a transit hub at Orchard Lake Road and Woodward Avenue; the site of the existing Amtrak station would be a logical location. The plan notes that bus rapid transit and commuter rail along the CN Railroad could provide residents with transit opportunities and form the northern end of a Pontiac to Detroit line. Around the transit hub, the City would like to see higher density mixed uses of residential, retail, and entertainment within a walkable environment.

Four different commercial classifications are shown on the map. A separate Downtown classification distinguishes the area within the Woodward Avenue loop from other commercial areas. Downtown Pontiac is meant to define the City so its vibrancy is paramount. Retail, entertainment, service, office, institutional, and residential uses should be promoted within the Downtown, making it a true destination. Rather than adhering to a strict use-based zoning, a form-based approach is recommended to allow for flexibility in filling downtown buildings depending upon market conditions. Any infill development must be sensitive to the historic fabric of Downtown Pontiac.

The other three commercial classifications are Neighborhood Commercial, Regional Commercial, and Corridor Commercial. Scale is the main difference between these different classifications. Both the Neighborhood Commercial and Corridor Commercial have aspects of strip development that the City would like to correct. One of the main Future Land Use goals is to limit strip commercial development and not allow it to expand beyond its current locations. The intent is to have Neighborhood Commercial areas function more as they were originally intended to meet the needs of the immediate neighborhoods rather than serve the passer-by

public. Physical improvements like landscaping and buffering should be considered to help these areas be more compatible with the adjacent residential. Pedestrian access to these sites will increase their usability by adjacent residents.

Corridor Commercial areas are located along Woodward Avenue, south of the Downtown, Baldwin Avenue, and Cesar E Chavez Avenue. Uses along these key corridors contribute to the appearance and identity of the City. The plan states that improvements to buildings, signage, and landscaping are needed to give visitors a better image of Pontiac.

Regional Commercial uses are intended to be larger in scale and would allow “Big Box” retail. Limited locations are planned for this classification, including the existing Home Depot site on Old Telegraph Road and Oakland Pointe south of the County Service Center on Telegraph. A new area planned for Regional Commercial is the former GM Validation Center site at South Boulevard and Woodward Avenue where a new grocery store would be a welcome addition.

An Office/Hospital/Health Care district is planned to accommodate the hospitals and office uses that exist outside of the Downtown. Main locations for this district are Woodward Avenue at the southern boundary with Bloomfield Township (St. Joseph Mercy Hospital) and Huron Avenue west of the Downtown (North Oakland Medical Center). Frontage areas along Woodward Avenue and Auburn Avenue east of the Downtown are also planned for this classification. New Economy businesses would be appropriate in this district.

Large areas are planned for the industrial classifications of Industrial/Utility and Research & Development. *“Pontiac’s greatest asset is its abundance of industrial and manufacturing land. In the contemporary economic environment, this is also Pontiac’s biggest challenge.”* (Page 120) Redeveloping some of these sites for smaller scaled research and development or emerging sector uses is a major goal.

Some of the other classifications shown on the map include Public Use, Civic Center, and Special District-Opportunity Sites. The largest Public Use site is the Oakland County Service Center at the western edge of the City. Municipal uses should be concentrated at the Civic Center site at Woodward and Auburn Avenues. A central civic campus could be expanded if the School Board property adjacent to City Hall could be acquired from the Pontiac School Board. Expanding the Civic Center and consolidating municipal functions at this location are two principal goals expressed in the plan.

The master plan text on page 122 indicates the Special District-Opportunity Sites classification is confined to three locations: the Silverdome, Collier Landfill, and property just south of the Oakland County Service Center. However, the Future Land Use map shows a fourth location in this classification, the Kennett Road Landfill. This inconsistency between the map and text should be reconciled before the plan is adopted. This classification is intended to provide some flexibility for future use although some general guidance is included in the plan.

Comparison of the Draft 2008 Future Land Use Map to the 2006 Map

Pontiac’s Future Land Use Map was last amended in July 2006, although the updated map was not sent to the Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee for review and comment prior

to adoption. The two maps use such different Future Land Use classifications that a direct comparison between the maps is not possible. The 2006 map used classifications like Transitional Office/Medium Density Residential/Parking; Heavy Commercial Distribution; and Transitional Industrial that have no equivalent classification on the draft map. New concepts like Mixed Use-Transit Oriented Development and Special District-Opportunity Sites have been introduced on this draft map.

While individual changes are too numerous to document, there are a few significant changes that can be noted. Most of the large industrial sites have been changed from an Industrial classification to Research & Development. Not surprisingly, many of the Potential Intensity Change Areas (PICA) have different classifications as well. For example, the Silverdome was shown as Public Service on the 2006 map but is now a Special District-Opportunity Sites. Both the former Kennett Road Landfill and the Collier Road Landfill were shown as Parks, Schools, and Other Recreation and Open Space. They also are now planned as Special District-Opportunity Sites. Another PICA is the GM Validation Center that was planned for Industrial but is now shown as Regional Commercial on the 2008 draft map.

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 Pontiac's five neighboring communities and with County Property.

North Boundary – City of Lake Angelus: The City of Lake Angelus Master Plan was adopted in July 1994. Pontiac shares approximately a mile border with the City of Lake Angelus from its northwestern corner to Baldwin Road. Along this border, Lake Angelus has planned for either Open Space/Recreation or Residential. Pontiac likewise has planned for residential or open space uses. Starting at the western most edge, Pontiac has planned for Low Density Residential, then Parks/Natural Area/Cemeteries and Medium Density Residential with Multiple Family Residential (existing senior housing) at Baldwin Road. This is a fairly consistent border although residential densities are higher in the City of Pontiac.

North and East Boundary – City of Auburn Hills: The City of Auburn Hills Master Land Use Plan was adopted in November 2002. The Auburn Hills plan is unique in that it has only three land use classifications; Residential, Non-Residential, and Public, with a variety of densities proposed for the Residential classification. The City of Auburn Hills provides more detail to its master plan through a variety of sub-area and neighborhood plans. Several of these adopted specialty plans are adjacent to the City of Pontiac.

Pontiac shares its northern border with the City of Auburn Hills from Baldwin Avenue east to its municipal boundary. From Baldwin to the railroad tracks, Pontiac has planned for Medium Density Residential (5-8 dwellings per acre) and School. This is compatible with the Residential (3 dwellings per acre) planned in Auburn Hills.

The border then turns north where the City of Pontiac's boundary forms an irregular protrusion. Pontiac has planned this area for high intensity uses of Industrial/Utility, Special District-

Opportunity Sites, Research & Development, and Parks/Natural Areas/Cemeteries. Most of the area in Auburn Hills surrounding the protrusion is planned for Non-Residential uses. These Non-Residential areas consist of Great Lakes Crossing regional mall and a large parcel with an existing golf dome. These uses are compatible with the high intensity uses planned in Pontiac. It should be noted however that two areas along the western edge of the protrusion are planned for Residential in Auburn Hills. The southernmost site is located on the south side of Collier Road and was just changed in January 2008 (MP 07-06) when the Auburn Hills Planning Commission adopted an amendment from Non-Residential to Residential adjacent to industrial in the City of Pontiac. The Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee found this change to be inconsistent. The other location is at the northern portion of this boundary where Auburn Hills has Residential adjacent to Research & Development in the City of Pontiac. Both of these areas are currently vacant. If research and development uses are proposed for this land along the railroad, effort should be undertaken during the site plan review process to ensure that buffering and landscaping are adequate to protect the residential land in Auburn Hills.

From the protrusion to the eastern municipal boundary, the City of Pontiac has planned for Low Density Residential (1-4 dwellings per acre). This is compatible with the City of Auburn Hills where the land is planned for either Residential (Vinewood Neighborhood Master Plan) or Public (Fieldstone Golf Course).

The City of Pontiac also shares its eastern boundary with the City of Auburn Hills from this northern point to South Boulevard. Much of this eastern border was given greater detail by the recently adopted Auburn Hills' Opdyke Road Corridor Study (MP 06-10).

Starting in the north, between the northern boundary and Walton Boulevard, Pontiac has planned for Low Density Residential and Multiple Family while Auburn Hills has Public and Residential. Between Walton and Pontiac Road, along Commonwealth Avenue, Pontiac has Neighborhood Commercial planned adjacent to Single Family and Planned Unit Use Mix in Auburn Hills. Uses proposed for the Planned Unit Use Mix include residential condominiums, senior housing, or congregate care. When commercial is proposed in Pontiac, it should be of a suitable scale to mainly serve the adjacent residential uses.

Between Pontiac Road and Featherstone, the City of Pontiac has planned for residential. The northern portion to University is planned for Low Density Residential (1 to 4 dwelling units per acre). This is adjacent to Single Family Residential, Business Park, Office, Retail, and Special Purpose in Auburn Hills. Most of the residential uses in Pontiac are buffered from Auburn Hills's non-residential uses by Galloway Lake. However, from Galloway Lake south to University Drive, Pontiac has Low Density Residential planned adjacent to Special Purpose in Auburn Hills. Previously, Pontiac had this southernmost part planned for Office. The City's change from Office to Low Density Residential makes this portion of the border less compatible with the Special Purpose use (Havenwyck Hospital) planned in Auburn Hills.

From University south to Featherstone Avenue, the City of Pontiac has planned for Medium Density Residential. This is adjacent to Special Purpose, Business Park, and Retail in Auburn Hills. In this location, the backyards of existing buildings in the Business Park are adjacent to the residential in Pontiac. From viewing aerials of this area, it appears that setbacks, screening,

and buffering have been taken into consideration to minimize the impact on the adjacent residential that is starting to be developed in this area. County staff feels that continued efforts should be made to ensure that the business and industrial uses do not negatively impact the newly developing homes.

Between Featherstone and M-59, the Silverdome is located in the City of Pontiac, which is planned for the Special District-Opportunity Sites classification. This is adjacent to a Business Park classification in Auburn Hills. These classifications are compatible, and the Silverdome's future redevelopment may provide additional development opportunities in the City of Auburn Hills as well.

Finally, south of M-59 to South Boulevard, both communities have mainly planned for non-residential uses. The City of Pontiac has Public Use (waste water treatment plant) at the interchange, then Industrial/Utility, Parks/Natural Areas/Cemeteries, Multiple Family Residential, and Research & Development. In Auburn Hills, this area is planned for Business Park (redeveloped Wal-Mart store), Residential Condominiums, Residential, and Non-Residential.

While there are some areas of inconsistency along this long border between both communities, overall the border is generally compatible. Where residential uses are adjacent to non-residential uses (on either side of the border), County staff encourages efforts to be undertaken during site plan review to provide proper landscaping and setbacks to buffer residential uses.

South Boundary – Bloomfield Township: The Charter Township of Bloomfield Master Plan Update was adopted in March 2007. Pontiac shares its entire southern border with Bloomfield Township, which is where both communities have some of their highest intensity uses planned.

At the western portion of this border, Pontiac has planned for Industrial/Utility west of Old Telegraph Road and Medium Density Residential east of Old Telegraph. In this area, Bloomfield Township has planned for Commercial and Institutional/Civic. Then to the east in Pontiac, the Pontiac Municipal Golf Course lies along the border. Pontiac has planned the golf course land for Parks/Natural Areas/Cemeteries. Bloomfield Township has planned for Institutional/Civic along Golf Drive, and then Recreation (part of the Pontiac Municipal Golf Course) and Commercial where the boundary turns to the southeast.

The boundary then turns to the south where Bloomfield Park is currently under construction. This large scale site proposed for retail/office/residential mixed use was annexed into the City of Pontiac several years ago, and after some litigation, an agreement has been worked out to allow both communities input into the development. Pontiac has this site planned for Mixed Use. Bloomfield Township has Commercial planned around the Bloomfield Park site.

East and west of Franklin Road, Pontiac has an existing residential area planned Medium Density Residential (5-8 dwellings/acre). This is adjacent to an area planned for Bloomfield Township's highest intensity use, Technology Park/Light Industry. The Existing Land Use map for Bloomfield Township shows that there are vacant parcels on the east side of Franklin, adjacent to the homes in Pontiac. The Bloomfield Township plan did acknowledge the need for

buffering, screening, and landscape berms between these intensive uses and adjacent homes. It is hoped that as new development is proposed in Bloomfield Township, their Planning Commission will give attention to these concerns during site plan review to overcome possible land use conflicts in this area.

East of the residential, the City of Pontiac now has its most intense uses planned at the border. The Office/Hospital/Health Care classification refers to St. Joseph Mercy Hospital on the west side of Woodward Avenue. Multiple Family is on the east side of Woodward. Along this portion of the boundary, Bloomfield Township has planned for Single Family Residential, with Office along the eastern frontage of Woodward Avenue.

Finally, Pontiac has Research & Development planned from the railroad to Opdyke Road. Bloomfield Township essentially has residential (Single Family and Attached Single Family Residential) surrounding the Industrial. On the surface, this appears to be an incompatible border with residential adjacent to industrial but there are some mitigating factors. The industrial is the Center Point campus. Most of the office and industrial buildings are set back significantly from the edge of the property, and the railroad acts as an additional buffer for the residential to the west of Center Point. In addition, this represents an existing condition where these land uses have been able to co-exist.

Southwest Boundary – City of Sylvan Lake: The City of Sylvan Lake Master Plan 2005 was adopted in April 2007. Pontiac shares its border with the City of Sylvan Lake in two places, separated by the lake. The first border is in the southwest corner of the City of Pontiac along James K Boulevard. In this location, Sylvan Lake has planned for Neighborhood Residential (including the two parcels currently used for commercial along Telegraph Road). The City of Pontiac has planned the James K Boulevard area for Medium Density Residential (5-8 dwellings per acre), with Neighborhood Commercial along the western frontage of Telegraph and Multiple Family (12 to 15 dwellings per acre) along the eastern frontage of Telegraph. This portion of the border is very compatible.

The second part of the border is that area of the City of Pontiac that is west of Telegraph Road, where Telegraph starts to bend to the southeast. This area is planned for Industrial/Utility and is adjacent to Neighborhood Residential in Sylvan Lake. Unfortunately, this classification is not defined in the plan and raises compatibility concerns. However, it also represents a long standing situation. The current industrial-type buildings on the parcel in Pontiac, adjacent to Sylvan Lake, have existed at least since 1974 per a review of our aerial photographs. Therefore, the future land use classifications represent a condition that has existed for over 30+ years.

West Boundary – Waterford Township: The Charter Township of Waterford Master Plan 2003-2023 was adopted in January 2003. The Pontiac/Waterford border starts south of the City of Lake Angelus. From this location to Dixie Highway, Waterford Township has planned for Single Family Residential and a small area of Quasi-Public Lands (private school). Pontiac has planned for Low Density Residential (1 to 4 dwellings per acre) and Parks/Natural Area/Cemeteries. At Dixie Highway and Telegraph, Waterford has planned for High Tech Services, a mixture of office, commercial, and clean industrial uses. Pontiac has planned this area for Special District-Opportunity Sites (Kennett Road Landfill—future use either recreational

or light industrial) and Corridor Commercial. Between Cesar E Chavez Avenue (formerly Oakland Avenue) and the railroad tracks, Pontiac has planned for Industrial/Utility. Uses along this portion of the border are compatible.

Just south of Dixie Highway, along Telegraph, is the Oakland County Service Center. This is shown as Public Use on the Pontiac Future Land Use map and Public Lands and Quasi-Public Lands on the Waterford map. South of this is the Planned Destination District in Waterford, the area of the Summit Place Mall. This is adjacent to Regional Commercial in Pontiac, representing the Oakland Pointe shopping center. South of Elizabeth Lake Road, in Waterford Township, the frontage is shown as Urban Business. This is compatible with the Neighborhood Commercial planned for the frontage from Elizabeth Lake Road to Voorheis Road in Pontiac. Along Voorheis Road on the north side, Waterford has a mixture of Single Family and Multiple Family planned. This is adjacent to the Medium Density Residential neighborhood south of Voorheis that is located within Pontiac city limits. Overall, the border is fairly consistent.

County Property – Oakland County Service Center: The Oakland County Service Center is located on the far western edge along Telegraph Road and is classified as Public Use on the Future Land Use map. The future land uses surrounding the Service Center reflect existing uses except for the Special District-Opportunity Sites area to the south. This designation is intended to provide the City with some flexibility regarding future development. The plan indicates that this vacant area could be used for either low density residential or a Technology Park. The residential could be a continuation of the Stonegate development that occurred on the former Clinton Valley Center State Hospital site. This housing development has provided the City with some of its newest homes and with proper buffering could be compatible with the Service Center. A Technology Park is also a compatible use that could fit in well with our campus setting. As the City continues its planning efforts in this location, they should invite County Facilities Management staff to discuss issues of mutual concern as the County has potential building sites located in this area as well.

The Oakland County Department of Facilities Management did provide comments on the Future Land Use Map. As the attached memo indicates, Oakland County would like to see all County Property, including the cemetery, sewage dump station site, and Materials Management and Sheriff Impound lot classified as Public Use as opposed to the current designation of Industrial/Utility for some of these uses.

Analysis

The City of Pontiac Master Plan sets forth a bold vision for the City of Pontiac for the next 20 years. The major foundation for the plan is the transition of Pontiac from the Old Economy to the New Economy. The Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University helped Pontiac to understand this important shift and the necessity to change the City's focus.

The plan does not minimize the challenges facing Pontiac but is forthright in addressing image, appearance, and economic problems in the City. What makes staff optimistic is the way implementation is proposed. The plan clearly identifies the need for partnerships to move implementation forward. In particular, the implementation matrix is an excellent tool that institutionalizes collaborative relationships. It acknowledges the need for partnerships with

various organizations outside the City to accomplish the goals expressed in the plan. Some of these organizations are the Oakland County Drain Commission to assist in daylighting the Clinton River; Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for converting Woodward Avenue to two-way traffic; the Clinton River Watershed Council for updating stormwater management practices; and the Land Policy Institute. The City may want to expand this list of partners as plan implementation progresses. For instance, the organization, The Greening of Detroit, has been involved in urban agriculture for a number of years and can provide some insight in engaging the community in this process. City Staff can see their website at www.greeningofdetroit.com for more information.

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services Division (PEDS) is identified as a major partner to work with the City on several fronts. Our office would be happy to assist the City of Pontiac in the areas of historic preservation, green infrastructure, economic development, non-motorized trail development, and other topics.

Some immediate assistance PEDS can offer is through our Technology Planning Toolkit. This document provides information to help communities review their master plans, zoning ordinances, and permitting processes to see what changes should be made to prepare for the technology and knowledge-based industries of the New Economy. This document should be available soon, and hopefully the Pontiac Planning Commission and City Staff will use it to help identify needed changes to their zoning ordinance and site plan review and permitting processes. The toolkit provides considerations for commercial, office, and industrial zoning districts and should complement the analysis already started in this plan regarding needed zoning ordinance changes.

When the Technology Planning Toolkit is complete, PEDS will be offering one or more training sessions for planning commissioners and professional planners to explain all the information that is available. We hope the City of Pontiac will use this resource as they implement the steps necessary to attract these emerging sector and technology businesses.

Another area of collaboration can be through Oakland County's Green Infrastructure Initiative. When the City of Pontiac was developed years ago, there was not an appreciation for or an understanding of the ecological importance of natural features. Hence, wetland and woodland preservation was not addressed. This plan makes a concerted effort to address this. Pontiac's Planning Staff have already met with County Planners from our Environmental Stewardship Unit to discuss assistance that can be provided to help inventory potentially significant natural areas. Using this inventory will be a good first step in preserving those features that remain and contribute to a "greener" image for the community.

Another agency identified to participate in the implementation of the plan is MDOT, who provided the attached comments. While MDOT has some specific traffic engineering concerns, they were not fundamentally opposed to the conversion concept for Woodward Avenue. Instead, they indicate the need for more complete traffic studies to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the roadway. It is gratifying to see that MDOT took the time to provide extensive comments, and they indicated their willingness to work collaboratively with the City.

On a final note, the plan indicates the need for a more expansive group to aid in implementation. *“Following the adoption of this plan by the Planning Commission, the City should seek to create a public-private partnership to assist with master plan implementation. There needs to be a non-governmental organization (NGO) to move the plan forward.”* (Page 147) PEDS staff feels this is an excellent recommendation. It is important to engage the residents in this important function. One addition to the implementation matrix may be to broadly publicize the master plan. The format of the City of Pontiac Master Plan is very reader-friendly. The plan begins with a good executive summary, and then each chapter starts with a summary page highlighting the key findings and conclusions for that topic. These summary pages could be converted into a public information document that should be widely distributed to let residents and business owners understand what is in the plan and become champions for its implementation.

Conclusion

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services Staff commends the City of Pontiac for preparing this new Master Plan.

Based on the review of the surrounding communities’ master plans, the City of Pontiac 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