

October 21, 2008

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

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

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The Clawson Planning Commission has prepared a new master plan to replace its 1990 Master Plan. 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 Clawson 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 28, 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 Clawson 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 Troy, Royal Oak, and Madison Heights; and SEMCOG were sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these recipients have received notice of the CZC meeting. Comments were received from the Cities of Royal Oak and Madison Heights and are attached.

Public Participation Process

The City of Clawson started the master plan updating process in 2006, and public participation was an important component. A workshop entitled "*The Future of Clawson as Envisioned by its Residents*" was held to provide residents and City Officials with an opportunity to develop and prioritize goals for the Master Plan. Small group discussions at the workshop allowed residents to further identify concerns and specific desires. Key issues identified through this public involvement process include downtown development, transportation/utility improvements, neighborhood development, business recruitment, and better use of community facilities, especially recreational facilities.

Plan Contents

The Plan consists of the following sections: Introduction; Location and Regional Setting; Historical Development; Population; Housing Characteristics; Existing Land Use; Economic Base; Community Facilities; Transportation; Public Participation; Goals and Policies; Future Land Use Plan; and Implementation. In the Appendix are the complete background studies and the 2004 Downtown Clawson Framework Urban Design Plan. Much of the plan consists of statistical and background information. Highlights from this information are provided below.

Clawson is a small, second ring city in southeast Oakland County. Its 2000 population is 12,732, which is approximately an 8% decrease from the 1990 population of 13,874. According to the SEMCOG 2030 Regional Development Forecast cited in the plan, the population of Clawson will continue to decline slightly to 10,654 persons in 2030. Surrounding communities show a similar decline in population; this may be attributed to the national trend of shrinking person per household numbers. It should be noted that in 2008 SEMCOG revised its population forecast and now projects to the year 2035. The new projection for the City of Clawson is 11,965 persons in 2030, an increase over the previous forecast. County staff recommends that these new numbers be incorporated into the master plan before it is adopted.

Housing in Clawson is mainly single family and owner-occupied. Over 82% of the 5,676 housing units in Clawson were built before 1969. Only 3% of the housing has been built since 1990 reflecting the built out nature of the community. Approximately 69% of Clawson's land area is in a residential use of single and two family homes. While only 5% of the land area is in multiple family residential use, 20% of the housing units are in multi-unit apartment buildings. *"The large percentage of residential development in the community equates to a high demand on services."* (Page 14)

After residential, the next highest percentage of land use is in recreation, public, and quasi-public uses. Clawson owns and maintains eight recreational facilities; the largest park is City Park at 36.9 acres. While over 8.8% of land area is devoted to these recreation, public, and quasi-public uses, this is a decrease from what was shown in the 1990 Master Plan. *"Reduction in public land area results from the closure of 2 public schools that directly relates to the aging population."* (Page 14)

Another 8% of the City of Clawson is devoted to commercial and office uses. The land use inventory prepared by the consultant separates commercial and offices uses into office/service, convenience commercial, community commercial, and highway commercial. Most of the commercial falls under the Community Commercial classification, which is a combination of retail and service uses. Commercial and office uses are located primarily in Clawson's downtown and along the major roadways of Fourteen Mile, Rochester, and Maple Roads.

Industrial land uses within Clawson have increased slightly from the 1990 Master plan; nearly 6% of total land area is now devoted to industrial uses. The largest location of industrial development is along Crooks Road in the northwestern corner of the City.

According to the 2007 land use inventory, 2.2% of Clawson is considered vacant (25 acres). Clawson is essentially a built out city although there are opportunities for redevelopment. The plan includes a discussion of the local economic base, community facilities, and transportation. *"The high percentage of people employed within a white collar profession (over 65%) has a direct correlation to the educational levels and age of the residents."* (Page 18)

Clawson owns and maintains its municipal water system and the local combined sanitary/storm sewer system. However, due to the age of the systems continual upgrades are needed.

Roads in the City of Clawson are under the jurisdiction of either the City or the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC). RCOC has jurisdiction over Maple Road, Crooks Road north of Fourteen Mile, Rochester Road north of Fourteen Mile, and Fourteen Mile east of Rochester. The City is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the remainder of the roads. In 2006, voters approved a special 3-mil tax for infrastructure improvements including water and sewer lines and street rehabilitation and/or reconstruction. Grants were obtained to fund the reconstruction of Fourteen Mile Road, which was undertaken in 2007. Alternative forms of transportation exist within the City including SMART busses and a paved bike route that runs through the City.

A Downtown Parking Study was undertaken to determine future parking needs. A combination of multi-level parking structures, on-street parking, and surface lots throughout the downtown area will be used to address these needs. *“Improved functionality of the City owned public parking lots is essential to the downtown merchants and patrons.”* (Page 31)

Two important chapters in this master plan address goals and policies, and implementation. Goal statements have been prepared for the following topic areas: Community Facilities, Business and Industry, Neighborhoods, Transportation, and Downtown. Specific policies are identified for each goal statement. The Implementation chapter gives specific recommendations on City Policy, Capital Improvement Program, Federal/State and Local Funds, Plan Education, and Master Plan Updates. In addition, an implementation schedule identifies tasks, timeframe, and the responsible party for each task.

Future Land Use Map

The visual representation of the City’s policies is shown on the Future Land Use map (attached). Most of Clawson is already developed; single family residential is the predominant use. Density for single family is not more than seven units per acre. *“While the majority of the City is currently largely developed, there is a possibility that some vacant areas or areas currently under commercial or industrial use could be converted to single-family residential areas.”* (Page 47)

A second residential classification, Multiple Family Residential, identifies those areas that provide for a higher density than allowed in single family areas. Most areas identified for this use are located along the main corridors of Fourteen Mile Road, Main Street, Crooks, and Rochester Road. Most of the Multiple Family designation is currently used as such although a few acres are shown that will allow for possible expansion of multi-family or senior housing.

The Industrial classification is confined to two areas on the Future Land Use map. The larger area is in the northwestern corner of Clawson along Crooks Road, north of Meijer Drive to Maple Road. The second area is along the northern part of Rochester Road between Goodale and E. Elmwood Avenues. Uses in the Industrial district include wholesale activities, warehouses, manufacturing, and processing operations that have only a minimal effect on surrounding districts. In comparing the Existing Land Use map to the Future Land Use map, it was noted that an existing industrial area on the north side of Fourteen Mile Road between Manitou and Bywood Street is planned for General Business in the future.

The Public/Quasi-Public classification includes government buildings, school buildings, and churches. These sites are scattered throughout the City. The largest area designated for this use is Clawson Middle School and High School on Main Street north of downtown.

A limited number of Recreation/Open Space sites are shown on the map. This classification includes all municipal and private parks, and school properties that may be used for public recreation. The largest area designated for this use is City Park located on the north side of W. Elmwood Avenue in the northwestern part of the City.

Other classifications shown on the map include General Business, Local Business, Central Business District, and Office. Descriptions of these classifications are not included in the plan; it is recommended that they be added before the plan is adopted. These uses are contained within the Corridor Redevelopment Districts that are located along the five primary thoroughfares of Main Street, Fourteen Mile, Maple, Crooks, and Rochester Roads. These redevelopment corridors are separated into four character districts that are briefly described below.

City Center includes the area of Main Street and Fourteen Mile Road and encompasses the Central Business District. The downtown is described as “*a destination and a hub of social and economic activity.*” (Page 52) Being the core of the City, a greater height of three to four stories is allowed to visually set it apart. Mixed uses are encouraged in this area. The Downtown Clawson Framework Urban Design Plan, located in the appendix of the Master Plan, provides specific recommendations for the physical improvement of downtown.

West Gate is the gateway into the City of Clawson along Fourteen Mile Road from Crooks Road to Manitou Avenue. Presently, buildings in this area are one story and generously setback from the street. This current design does not promote a feeling of entry into the City. In order to create a visual gateway, a new character is desired for this area. When the area is redeveloped, the plan envisions two story buildings that are placed near the right-of-way. This will provide a greater sense of arrival as one passes from Royal Oak into Clawson along Fourteen Mile Road. General Business uses including mixed-use commercial and office are planned in *West Gate*.

Business Renewal includes corridor frontages on: Rochester Road, Main Street, Crooks, Fourteen Mile Road, and Maple. Currently, uses consist primarily of one story commercial, office, and industrial buildings. Because these corridors developed over a period of time, varied setbacks and different parking patterns (front, side, and rear parking) developed. Consequently, these districts lack visual consistency. The goal for the business renewal districts is to establish some continuity along these corridors as they undergo redevelopment. The plan identifies the need to evaluate each district and through an overlay zone approach develop site design standards that address building location, landscaping, access, and parking location to create a coherent district.

Residential Preservation encompasses primarily multi-family concentrations along the main roadways of Crooks Road, Main Street, and Fourteen Mile Road. “*The preservation of residential segments provides land use and visual relief from continuous strips of non-residential development.*” (Page 55) While most of these areas are currently classified as well maintained, the plan identifies the need for code enforcement to continue the attractiveness of these areas. Institutional uses or low intensity office uses that are currently within the *Residential Preservation* districts can remain.

Comparison of the Draft 2008 Future Land Use Map to the 1990 Map

The two maps are very similar and use primarily the same Future Land Use classifications; differences include the addition of a Corridor Redevelopment District overlay to the 2008 map and a change to the name of the commercial districts. On the 1990 map, commercial classifications are called Retail/Service Commercial and General Commercial. On the 2008 map, these same locations are called either General Business or Local Business. Both maps have a Central Business District, Office, Industrial, Public/Quasi-Public, Recreation/Open Space, and two Residential classifications.

The bulk of Clawson remains residential, and the location of these areas remains relatively unchanged. The other land use classifications have remained generally constant as well. The most significant change is the addition of the Corridor Redevelopment Districts along the main road corridors and their corresponding character districts described above.

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 Clawson's neighboring communities.

North Boundary – City of Troy: The City of Troy 2008 Master Plan (MP 08-09) was just adopted on October 14, 2008. Clawson shares its northern border with the City of Troy from Crooks to North Campbell Road. Along Crooks, Troy has planned a mixed use district called The Transit Center while Clawson has Industrial along the frontage. Along Maple, Troy has the Maple Road District while Clawson has a mixture of General Business, Industrial, and Office. The border then goes south along Livernois Road (North Main Street in Clawson) where Troy has both Maple Road and 21st Century Industrial classifications. This is adjacent to General Business and Multiple Family Residential in Clawson. The border continues to the east along Elmwood Avenue. Here, the City of Troy has planned for 21st Century Industrial while Clawson has planned for Public/Quasi-Public, and Single Family and Multiple Family Residential, with a small area of Industrial at Rochester Road. Finally, Single Family Residential is planned in both communities for the last portion of the border between Elmwood and Fourteen Mile Road. While there are a variety of uses planned along this shared border, the classifications represent existing land uses and are generally compatible. Also, the non residential uses planned in Clawson on Maple Road should be compatible with the changes proposed by Troy for the Maple Road frontage where primarily industrial uses could transition to a more eclectic mix, including loft style residential units and mass transit stops.

South Boundary – City of Royal Oak: The Master Plan City of Royal Oak was adopted in August 1999. Clawson shares its southern border with the City of Royal Oak. Starting at the western boundary along Crooks Road from Elmwood south to Fourteen Mile Road, Clawson has planned for Office and Multiple Family with General Business at Fourteen Mile Road. Royal Oak has planned for Multiple Family along Crooks with Mixed Use – Residential/Office/Commercial at the Fourteen Mile intersection. South of Fourteen Mile to the southern boundary, Clawson has planned for Multiple Family with Public/Quasi-Public at the

southwestern corner. Royal Oak has planned for Multiple Family and Single Family Residential – Medium Density.

Heading east along Clawson's southern boundary, both Clawson and Royal Oak have planned primarily for single family with two exceptions. At the southwestern most corner, Clawson has an area of Public/Quasi-Public and Multiple Family. This is adjacent to a large area of Public/Institutional (school) in Royal Oak. Then, at Main Street, Clawson has planned for Office while Royal Oak has a small area of Public/Institutional planned at the southeast corner.

Heading north along Rochester Road, Clawson has Local Business and Multiple Family planned for the west side of the road, while Royal Oak has planned for Single Family Residential – Attached-Detached and Mixed Use – Residential/Office/Commercial on the east side of Rochester Road. The last leg of the border is along Fourteen Mile Road. Here, Clawson has planned for Local Business and Office to Wilson Avenue, and Multiple and Single Family to the eastern boundary. Royal Oak has planned for Single Family – Low and Medium Density to the eastern boundary.

Generally speaking, the Clawson/Royal Oak border is compatible as more intensive uses are along the main thoroughfares of Crooks and Rochester Roads, while residential neighborhoods span the two communities along Clawson's southern municipal border. The City of Royal Oak sent a letter stating “*no objections*” to the draft plan.

Analysis

The City of Clawson is mainly built out; therefore, there is a strong redevelopment focus in this master plan. The corridors targeted for redevelopment are the main thoroughfares of Crooks, Maple, Main Street, Fourteen Mile, and Rochester Roads. The single family residential neighborhoods in Clawson are bounded by these main roads with more intensive uses like commercial, office, and industrial fronting on the roads. These corridors were developed years ago and are now in need of improvement. Interestingly, the plan does not emphasize land use changes as much as changes to the urban form. Increases in building height, for example, are planned to delineate certain areas along Fourteen Mile Road. At the western gateway into the community, at Fourteen Mile and Crooks, two story buildings are preferred while three to four stories will be allowed in the downtown area to intensify and denote this special part of the community. Improvements in other road corridors that relate to consistency in building setback, landscaping, signage, and parking lot location are envisioned to bring more visual unity to them. This is important as most non-residents gain their view of Clawson while driving along one of these main thoroughfares. Improving the appearance of these areas will enhance the image of Clawson.

One area that truly contributes to the identity of the City is the downtown. This is the heart of Clawson. In 2004, the City adopted the Downtown Clawson Framework Urban Design Plan (MP 04-06). This plan, included in the appendix, identifies some of the existing problems in the downtown. These problems include surface parking lots that create gaps in the downtown fabric and varied building setbacks. Both of these problems disrupt the pedestrian scale of the downtown. The plan recommends using some of these parking lots for infill development. Mixed-use development of ground floor retail and upper residential is desired. In terms of set

back, a zero lot line is the preferred alignment for the core downtown. Having all buildings built to the sidewalk provides a sense of enclosure and a more pedestrian-friendly appearance.

The goals and recommendations in the Framework Plan are organized around the Main Street Four-Point Approach™ established by the National Main Street Center, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The four areas are design, promotion, economic restructuring (retail/land use mix), and organization. It is appropriate that the Framework Plan uses this Four-Point Approach, an approach encouraged by Main Street Oakland County. Just last month, the City of Clawson was admitted into the Main Street Oakland County Mentoring Program. This program provides communities with an opportunity to understand what services and resources the Main Street Oakland County program can provide and conversely what responsibilities the community must undertake to become a full fledged Main Street Oakland County community. During the two years of mentor status, a community receives assistance from Oakland County and other Main Street communities and time to prepare itself for the staff and city commitment necessary to apply for full status. The Framework Plan provides a good starting point as it contains a recommended work program for the four required downtown committees of design, promotion, economic restructuring, and organization.

Conclusion

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

Based on the review of the surrounding communities' master plans, the City of Clawson 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,

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Principal Planner

Enclosures