

February 17, 2009

Commissioner Robert Gosselin, Chairperson
Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee
1200 North Telegraph Road
Pontiac, MI 48341

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 09-01, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the 2008 Holly Township Master Plan

Dear Chairperson Gosselin and Committee Members:

The Holly Township Planning Commission has prepared an updated master plan to replace its 2003 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, Holly 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 February 24, 2009 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 Holly 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 Holly Township Building and Zoning Administrator, the Village of Holly; Groveland, Rose, Springfield, Atlas, Mundy, Hartland, Grand Blanc, Tyrone, and Fenton Townships; and the City of Fenton were sent notification that a copy of the draft plan was posted on Holly Township's website. All of these communities have received notice of the CZC meeting. No comments were received.

Public Participation Process

Back in September 1997, residents and representatives from churches, schools, home building, and conservation groups were invited to attend a Visioning Workshop. Results from that workshop were used in the formulation of the goals and policies for the master plan that was adopted in 1998. For this current update, the Holly Township Planning Commission conducted a "*thorough revision*" of the previous 2003 plan. However, the draft plan does not indicate that another public participation effort was undertaken for this 2008 update.

Plan Contents

The plan consists of the following four chapters: Introduction, Background Studies, Goals and Policies, and Land Use Plan. The appendix contains the 2004 Potential Conservation/Natural Areas Report prepared by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory for Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services.

Holly Township is a rural township in the extreme northwestern corner of Oakland County. Most of the existing single family residential is very low density. About 57% of the Township is

in either an agricultural, recreational, or vacant use. While there is a limited amount of commercial in Holly Township, the Village of Holly is viewed as the commercial center. Retail and service uses are also available in nearby Fenton and Grand Blanc. Regional access is provided by I-75 and Dixie Highway, both located in the far eastern part of the Township. The main north-south route is North Holly Road that traverses the middle of the Township. The main east-west route is Grange Hall Road that is located in the southern part of the Township.

According to the 2000 Census, Holly Township (excluding the Village of Holly) had a population of 3,902, almost a 20% increase since 1990 when the population was 3,257. The Village of Holly has a 2000 population of 6,135, almost a 10% increase since 1990. This brings the “Holly Community” (Township and Village) 2000 population to 10,037. A 2007 estimate shows an increase to 12,081 persons for the Holly Community. Most of this growth can be attributed to population increase in Holly Township. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) forecasts that the Holly Community population will be 13,608 by 2035. Holly Township’s portion of this growth is projected to be 7,505 persons, with the Village of Holly’s population projected to be 6,103, a small decrease from the current estimate.

The population increase in the Township is an outgrowth of the new residential development that has occurred, primarily adjacent to the Village of Holly. “*A total of seven hundred thirty-nine (739) permits were issued between 1997 and 2007 averaging approximately sixty-seven (67) new units a year within Holly Township.*” (Page 22) Almost 30% of the housing stock in Holly Township was constructed since 2000. This is in sharp contrast to the Village of Holly where 50% of the housing units were built before 1970.

Holly Township is not served by sewer and water, although two sewer and water districts have been established to identify where utilities may be extended. One district is in the northeast corner of the Township where the Grand Blanc Township sewer system currently services a portion of a planned residential development. The second district is adjacent to the western edge of the Village of Holly. Here, the Village sewer system has been extended to service higher density residential development that has been constructed within the last five years.

Natural resource protection is an important goal to this rural community as wetlands and woodlands are found throughout the Township. The plan contains several maps showing topography, recreation areas, wetlands, woodlands, Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) natural areas, soil limitations, and 2007 land use. Large areas of state parkland contribute to the open space/low density character of Holly Township. The Background Studies chapter includes a listing of recreational activities available at the multitude of state, county, and local parks found in and around Holly Township.

Maintaining the rural and natural resource character of the Township is an overriding goal. The philosophy is that “*the intensity of land use should be dependent on the natural capability of the land to support various degrees of development.*” (Page 48) Where there are sensitive natural resources, inadequate roads, surrounding low intensity uses, and a resource base least capable of supporting development, development should be of a low density nature. Higher density development is only allowed where the resource base supports higher intensity uses, where there

is access to major thoroughfares and expressways, and where there is an existing pattern of higher intensity uses.

Policies were prepared for the following topic areas: land use intensity; natural resource capability; residential land use; long range infrastructure planning; roads; parks, recreation, and open space; commercial development; industrial development; extractive lands; public education; coordination with other government bodies; and farmland preservation. The importance of natural systems such as wetlands, drainage, stream corridors, groundwater recharge areas, and woodlands is explained in the discussion of the policies.

In addition to the Future Land Use Plan, the Land Use Plan chapter contains a brief overview of Corridor Studies and Special Planning Areas. General guidelines have been prepared for the Grange Hall, North Holly, and East Holly Road corridors that address access management and image of each corridor as a gateway into the Township. The Rattalee Lake Wetlands area and Grange Hall/Fish Lake Roads intersection are the two special planning areas for which general recommendations have been prepared. The Rattalee Lake Wetlands, located in the southeast corner of the Township, are important because of their pristine environmental condition. *“Holly Township can capitalize on this natural asset by working for its protection and featuring the area as a visitor destination point which represents some of the natural beauty which can be found in the Township.”* (Page 68) A conservation easement or some other form of environmental protection is recommended. The other special planning area is the Grange Hall/Fish Lake Roads intersection, just to the west of the Village of Holly. This intersection is one of only three areas planned for commercial and office uses. The Township has adopted an Overlay District for this area to help upgrade commercial properties and improve signage and landscaping.

The master plan also includes a Transportation Plan and a Greenways Plan. The Transportation plan classifies the key roadways in the community and identifies future right-of-way widths. Most of the major roads are planned for a 120 foot right-of-way while secondary roads are planned for 86 foot rights-of-way. Most of the roads in Holly Township are under the jurisdiction of the Road Commission for Oakland County.

Because of the amount and quality of natural resources found in Holly Township, their importance is stressed in the plan. A Greenways plan has been prepared to show how these natural areas can be linked to form a network. The plan indicates that greenways *“conserve green space, protect natural resources, provide recreational opportunities, allow alternative modes of transportation, and allow for visual access of natural areas.”* (Page 76) The Plan identifies ways to connect water and wetland corridors, pedestrian linkages such as trails and safety paths, and open space among developments. The results of the Green Infrastructure Visioning Session conducted by Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services (PEDS) staff are also included in the plan.

The plan concludes with a page on Implementation, citing the mechanisms available to Holly Township to implement the plan.

Future Land Use Map

The visual representation of the Township's policies is shown on the Future Land Use map (attached). The single largest planned land use is residential; Holly Township is planning for a variety of residential densities. There are seven residential classifications shown on the map:

1. Resource Conservation/Residential - One dwelling unit per 5 acres.
2. Low Density Residential/Agricultural – One dwelling unit per 5 acres.
3. Low Density Estate Residential – One dwelling unit per 2.5 acres.
4. Medium Density Residential –One dwelling unit per acre.
5. Multiple Family Residential – 5 dwelling units per acre.
6. Planned Residential – density to be determined based upon availability of utilities and adjacent land uses.
7. Manufactured Housing Park (3 to 4 units/acre)

Over half of Holly Township is planned for either Resource Conservation/Residential or Low Density Residential/Agricultural. Both classifications call for one dwelling unit per 5 acres. The Resource Conservation classification is a special designation used by the Township to denote areas of significant natural features. In 1988 the Nature Conservancy prepared a Survey of Natural Areas in Holly Township. Twenty-two (22) areas were identified throughout the Township, and these areas form the basis for the Resource Conservation classification. Due to the sensitive nature of the natural resources, clustering and buffering are suggested when development is proposed in these areas.

The Low Density Estate Residential is planned north of the Village of Holly along the North Holly Road Corridor, and to the east of the Village along Grange Hall Road. Two other areas of Low Density Estate Residential are planned for the southeast corner of the Township and a small area west of the Village.

Residential densities around the Village of Holly are shown as Medium Density, Multiple Family, or Planned Residential. The Township has historically planned for its higher densities around the Village where water and sewer are available. The area immediately west of the Village is one of two Sewer and Water Service Districts that have been established. The district is a defined area within which municipal sewer and water can be extended.

The other Sewer and Water Service District is in the extreme northeast corner, separated from the rest of the Township by I-75. This area consists of higher intensity uses: Light Industrial, Research/Office, Mixed Use, Commercial/Office, Multiple Family, Planned Residential, and Medium Density Residential. This northeast corner is the only area within Holly Township where Mixed Use, Light Industrial, and Research/Office are planned. Areas designated for Planned Residential in this location represent the reclamation use of existing mining operations.

The one area of Manufactured Housing Park, shown along Falk Road, represents an existing mobile home park that has been developed within the last ten to fifteen years.

After residential, the second largest planned land use is State Recreation Lands, which comprise almost 18% of Holly Township's land area. Seven Lakes State Park is in the western part of the Township, and the Holly State Recreation Area is in the eastern half of the Township. The

recently constructed National Veterans Cemetery, between Belford and Lahring Roads east of North Holly Road, is in the Institutional/Local Recreation classification. Other uses in the Institutional/Local Recreation classification include the Michigan Renaissance Festival property east of I-75 and south of Lahring Road, and the High School on East Holly Road.

Higher intensity uses are limited to specific areas in the Township. Commercial/Office land is shown at only three locations, the Grange Hall/Fish Lake Road intersection, Grange Hall/I-75 interchange, and the Dixie Highway corridor near McClelland Road. Other higher intensity uses are concentrated in the northeastern Sewer and Water Service District, as noted above.

Comparison of the draft 2008 Future Land Use map to the 2003 map

In comparing the two maps, the most obvious difference is in the way the Resource Conservation/Residential classification is displayed on the maps. On the 2003 map, this classification is shown as irregularly shaped polygons that follow the general outlines of wetland and woodland areas, where dashed lines are used to show lowland hardwoods, lowland conifers, and shrub, emergent wetlands. The 2008 draft map no longer shows these wetland and vegetation categories but defines the Resource Conservation/Residential areas by entire parcel shapes.

Other smaller changes were also noted. The Low Density Estate Residential corridor along North Holly Road has been narrowed, mainly from Mitchell Road to County Line Road. The area just west of the Village of Holly, between the railroad and Academy Road, was previously planned for Mixed Use but is now planned for Medium Density Residential. North of the railroad, some of the area planned for Multiple Family Residential is now shown as Planned Residential. The Manufactured Housing Park classification has expanded a little to include a parcel adjacent to the lake. The Commercial/Office areas have slightly different configurations between the two maps as well.

Coordination with Surrounding Community Boundaries

Under the new 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. Each of the adjacent communities has been encouraged to provide Holly Township with comments if they have any concerns.

Southwest Boundary – City of Fenton: The City of Fenton Master Plan May 2008 Draft was consulted for this review. The City of Fenton and Holly Township share a boundary from Tinsman Road south to the municipal line. Around 2004, the City of Fenton annexed less than ten acres from Holly Township at the southern part of this boundary. Therefore, a very small part of the City of Fenton (eight parcels) protrudes into the geographic township of Holly.

Along this entire border, the City of Fenton has planned for Low Density Single Family (two units per acre) except for the area south of the railroad track. This area is planned for Urban Residential (up to eight units per acre) and includes the annexed area as well. In Holly Township, the border is mostly planned for Resource Conservation/Residential and Low Density Residential/Agricultural (both 1 dwelling unit/5 acres), with Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/acre) around Grange Hall Road. The Seven Lakes State Park is also near this

border. While densities are lower in Holly Township, there is still boundary coordination as single family residential is planned for both sides of the border.

Northwest Boundary – Fenton Township: The Charter Township of Fenton Land Use Plan 2002-2022 was adopted in December 2002 and amended in April 2005. Fenton Township and Holly Township share a boundary from Tinsman Road north to the municipal line. In Fenton Township, most of this border area is planned for Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/acre), with Low Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/2 acres) planned for about ½ mile south of Thompson Road. From Thompson Road north to the municipal line, Manufactured Home Residential is planned. Along this entire border in Holly Township, either Resource Conservation/Residential or Low Density Residential/Agricultural (both 1 dwelling unit/5 acres) is planned. Residential uses are planned along both borders, and again, densities are lower in Holly Township. If the Manufactured Home Residential site in Fenton Township is developed, the lake in the northwestern most corner of Holly Township will act as a buffer for this higher density use.

North Boundary – Grand Blanc Township: The Charter Township of Grand Blanc Master Plan was adopted by the Township Board in September 2004 and was amended in September 2008. Holly Township shares its entire northern border with Grand Blanc Township. Starting from the west, Public & Private Recreation is planned at the far southwestern corner in Grand Blanc Township. Then Rural Estate (range of 1 unit/acre to 1 unit/4 acres) and Rural Corridor Preservation Area (preservation of natural features) are planned to just west of North Holly Road. Along this same border area, Holly Township has planned for either Resource Conservation/Residential or Low Density Residential/Agricultural (both 1 dwelling unit/5 acres). This portion of the border is very compatible since low densities are planned along both sides of the border.

At North Holly Road, Grand Blanc Township has planned for Light Industrial. This is adjacent to Low Density Estate Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres) in Holly Township. According to the Grand Blanc Township Master Plan, the Light Industrial classification *“is intended to accommodate office, light industrial, warehousing, and research and development uses...When adjacent to residential uses, appropriate buffering should be provided.”* (Page 5-5) About a mile north of this Light Industrial corridor is located the large Genesys Health complex. The Holly Township Master Plan acknowledges the higher intensity uses planned in Grand Blanc Township and the need for coordination with its neighbor. *“If growth of the Genesys Health Center complex continues south to the Township boundary, then Holly Township should review future land uses in order to ensure a transition to existing land uses, which are large lot, single family residential in character.”* (Page 72) County staff recommends that when higher intensity development is proposed in Grand Blanc Township, both Townships discuss mutually acceptable ways to minimize any potential conflicts at this border area, including buffering, landscaping, and generous setbacks.

From North Holly Road to the eastern boundary, the border is again very compatible. Grand Blanc Township has planned for Rural Estate west of I-75, and Public & Private Recreation and Rural Corridor Preservation Area east of I-75. Along this portion, Holly Township has planned primarily for Resource Conservation/Residential with a small area of Planned Residential east of

I-75. The Planned Residential represents part of a large scale residential development in Grand Blanc Township that extends into Holly Township. Sewers were also extended into Holly Township to service this development.

East Boundary – Groveland Township: The Groveland Township Master Plan of Future Land Use was adopted in May 2005 and amended in September 2008 (County Code 08-08). Holly Township shares its entire eastern boundary with Groveland Township. From the northern boundary south to Lahring Road, Holly Township has planned for Planned Residential (density determined by availability of services) and Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/acre). Groveland Township has planned for Rural Estate Farm (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres) and Recreation or Open Space. At the point where Dixie Highway crosses the border, Holly Township has Research/Office planned adjacent to a small area of Local Neighborhood Commercial and Light Industrial in Groveland Township.

Between Lahring and Holdridge Roads is the Michigan Renaissance Festival property that extends over both Townships. It is shown as Institutional/Local Recreation in Holly Township and Recreation or Open Space in Groveland Township. The Michigan Renaissance Festival property in Holly Township is also adjacent to property planned for Single Family Medium Density (1 dwelling unit/acre) and Mobile Home Park in Groveland Township. South of Holdridge Road, Planned Residential in Holly Township is adjacent to Light and General Industrial and Technical Research or Mixed Use in Groveland Township. Both the Planned Residential and the Technical Research or Mixed Use areas are currently being mined. Township officials should work together as reclamation is proposed. During the site plan review process, attention to access, buffering, setbacks, and landscaping will be required to minimize possible impacts of Groveland Township's industrial and research or mixed uses on the single family residential planned in Holly Township.

At the I-75/Grange Hall Road interchange, both communities are planning for a small amount of commercial use. From the interchange south to the municipal line, Holly Township has planned for State Recreation Lands (Holly State Recreation Area) and Low Density Estate Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres). Groveland Township has planned for Recreation or Open Space (a continuation of the Holly State Recreation Area) and Rural Estate Farm (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres). This portion of the border is very consistent.

South Boundary – Rose Township: The Master Plan Rose Township was adopted in July 2005. Holly Township shares its southern border with Rose Township both east and west of the Village of Holly. To the east of the Village of Holly, Rose Township has mainly planned for Rural Preservation/Agriculture (1 dwelling unit/10 acres) with a smaller area of Rural Residential/Agriculture (1 dwelling unit/5 acres) at the eastern most municipal boundary. In this location, Holly Township has planned for Low Density Estate Residential (1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres) with a small area of Resource Conservation/Residential (1 dwelling unit/5 acres) adjacent to the Village of Holly. West of the Village of Holly, Rose Township has mainly planned for Single Family Residential (1 dwelling unit/1.5 acres) with small areas of Rural Preservation/Agriculture and Rural Residential/Agriculture. Holly Township has planned this border area for Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/acre) east of Fish Lake Road and Low Density Estate Residential west of Fish Lake Road. Then Resource

Conservation/Residential and Low Density Residential/Agricultural (both 1 dwelling unit/5 acres) are shown to the municipal line.

Where the northwestern most corner of Rose Township meets the southwestern most corner of Holly Township, Rose Township shows High Density Residential (6 units/acre). While this is a considerable increase in density from the 1 dwelling unit/5 acres in Holly Township, with proper buffering, setbacks, and site improvements, potential conflicts could be mitigated when a development is proposed in the future. Overall, this is a compatible border as single family residential uses of varying densities are planned along both sides of this entire border area.

Internal to the Township – Village of Holly: The Village of Holly Master Plan was adopted in January 2007. Holly Township surrounds the Village of Holly to the east, north, and west. The eastern edge of the Village of Holly is planned mostly for Low Density Residential (3 to 5 units/acre). Along this border, Holly Township is planning for Medium Density Residential (1 dwelling unit/acre). At the far southeastern corner of the Village of Holly, the land is planned for Park (Sorenson Park); this is adjacent to Resource Conservation/Residential (1 dwelling unit/5 acres) in Holly Township. This part of the border is very compatible.

The western edge of the Village of Holly also is mainly planned for Low Density Residential with a small area of Moderate Density Residential (up to 7 dwelling units/acre) and three areas of Public Land also adjacent to Holly Township. The western edge of the Village of Holly is where Holly Township has traditionally planned for its higher density uses. Planned Residential (density determined by availability of services) and Medium Density Residential are planned along this border in Holly Township. Two smaller areas of Multiple Family Residential (5 dwelling units/acre) are planned in this general area but not immediately adjacent to the Village of Holly. Commercial/Office uses are planned at the Grange Hall and Fish Lake Road intersection, which are adjacent to a small area of Neighborhood Commercial planned in the Village. Within the last few years, a major development called Riverside has been constructed adjacent to the Village of Holly. The higher density of these single family homes and multiple family units was made possible through the provision of sewer services from the Village.

A copy of the Village's Future Land Use map is included in the draft Holly Master Plan. The draft plan acknowledges the importance of the Village. *“Not only is the Village located in the heart of the Township, it provides residents opportunities for shopping and services, jobs, entertainment, recreation, and a variety of housing choices.”* (Page 63)

Analysis

The last time Holly Township updated its master plan was five years ago in 2003. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act indicates that every five years communities should evaluate whether to update their plans. While this draft plan is basically the same as the one prepared in 2003, updated demographic information was added to give a more current view of conditions in the Township. In addition, recent developments in the Township, mainly the new residential development adjacent to the Village of Holly, are mentioned. This information helps to keep the plan current. Holly Township Planning Commission should be commended for taking the time and effort to complete this current update.

The main feature of this plan is its strong natural resource orientation. Starting with the philosophy expressed in the goal statements, the plan indicates that the natural capability of the land to support development will be used as the foundation for the plan. The Greenways Plan further complements this approach by identifying the areas where important resources are located and illustrating ways they can be linked into green corridors for wildlife habitat, recreation, and open space conservation. This type of plan is particularly useful for a rural community like Holly Township that still has much land available for development. The plan shows how existing recreational areas can be linked through proposed trails and public and private open space. The Greenways Plan also can give guidance as development is proposed to show how open space preserved in one residential development can be linked to other preserved open space. The resulting open space network that will be created will contribute to the rural character by preserving wildlife habitats and visual corridors.

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services (PEDS) staff is also pleased to see that the 2004 Potential Conservation/Natural Areas Report was included in the appendix. This report was prepared by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory for PEDS to explain how natural areas throughout Oakland County were identified and ranked. The map showing these ranked sites is included in the plan, and this was an important component in the Green Infrastructure Visioning session that was conducted by PEDS with Township officials. Having this report in the appendix provides the reader with a greater understanding of the importance of these natural sites and bolsters the Greenways Plan.

Conclusion

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

Based on the review of the surrounding communities' master plans, the 2008 Holly Township 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

Enclosure