



Washtenaw County
Department of Planning & Environment

April 28, 2008

LuAnn Koch, Sylvan Township Clerk
Sylvan Township
18027 Old US 12
Chelsea, MI 48118

Re: Sylvan Township Comprehensive Plan Update

Dear Ms. Koch:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Sylvan Township's Comprehensive Plan Update. In accordance with the Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959 as amended, the update was reviewed by Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board and the Board of Commissioners. The Washtenaw County Department of Development Services, Department of Parks and Recreation, Road Commission, Department of Public Health, Office of the Drain Commissioner and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) were also given the opportunity to comment on the update.

The Township took valuable steps toward supporting regional planning and intergovernmental cooperation with surrounding local units of government to accomplish community-wide goals. The inclusion of a section describing the surrounding land uses and zoning of adjacent jurisdictions, as well as goals to support the Chelsea area identity, to manage growth in the township by focusing it in designated urban areas, and the emphasis on participating in regional solutions speak to the importance of planning cooperatively to benefit the Township, as well as the neighboring communities.

Staff reviewed the proposed update in the context of *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County (County Plan)*, plans of contiguous local units of government and the current Sylvan Township Comprehensive Plan (Township Plan). Staff found the proposed amendments would be consistent with the County Plan and the plans for the contiguous communities with the following recommendations:

- While the overall pattern for development described in the Township Plan corresponds to that recommended in the Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County, the Rural Residential Area is set for a two acres minimum lot size, while the County Plan suggests this area to be a minimum lot size of five acres. This recommendation is founded on the increased ability to preserve rural character and agricultural operations when larger lots are required.

Although the following recommendations are not applicable to the consistency with the County Plan, we strongly encourage the incorporation of the following to enhance the overall plan:

- Adoption of the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) Non-motorized Plan for Washtenaw County and the WATS Transit plan by reference. This point is supported by WATS.
- The Township Plan mentions the importance of interconnected natural features system. Developing a regional greenway plan that combines a natural features inventory with a regional recreation trail system would satisfy multiple goals set by the Township Plan.
- In order to support the Township's efforts to maintain its rural character and to use resources efficiently as development progresses, gravel road capacity should be considered. A study of gravel road capacities as a means to manage growth was prepared by the Huron River Watershed Council and can be found at http://www.hrwc.org/pdf/PAL_Guidebook.pdf.
- Historic resources are integrated components of Sylvan Township's rich, multi-dimensional building stock. The Sylvan Township Proposed Draft Comprehensive Plan omits mention of the importance of such historic resources, and makes no provision for their careful use, recognition, preservation, or rehabilitation. Sylvan Township should consider articulating a goal to seek protection and preservation of historic resources through local, state and national programs.
- The Township Plan discusses the importance of long-term viable agriculture to the region and the Agricultural Area Policies refer to the use of purchase of development rights programs to preserve farming operations. Sylvan Township should also consider the use of agricultural preservation tools in order to further protect both the rural character of the Township, as well as the viability of farms. Designating lands for agricultural preservation through an overlay and stating that these lands should not be considered land banks for future rural or urban development or as low density residential areas would be a strong addition to the language. In addition, the amendments to the Township Plan could make Sylvan Township eligible for additional points from the State of Michigan PDR Program however necessary maps were not included in the draft Township Plan. Specific requirements are included in more detail in the attached Staff Review and Statement of Consistency with MAPF (State PDR Program). The opportunity for and importance of agricultural preservation is also supported by Washtenaw County Public Health.
- Wetland and woodland maps should also be included to avoid confusion over areas appropriate for development. Map 8 illustrates soil classes. The plan does not make it clear whether these classes have development limitations. If so, how

they will be addressed through development restrictions or conservation practices should be included in the plan and highlighted on the Map for clarification.

The attached staff report provides additional background regarding County comments as well as additional detailed recommendations from other County Agencies. On behalf of the Planning Advisory Board and the Board of County Commissioners, I would like to thank you for your contribution to promoting a shared vision for Washtenaw County.

If the Department may be of assistance to the Township as you work to implement the policies included in your plan, please call me at (734) 222-6809.

Sincerely,

Patricia Denig, Planning Services
Department of Planning and Environment
Washtenaw County

Attachments

Staff Report

Statement of Consistency with State PDR-MARF

Recommended Energy Language

Washtenaw County Public Health comments

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) comments

cc: Lyndon Township
City of Chelsea
Lima Township
Sharon Township



Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment

Staff Report

RE: Sylvan Township Comprehensive Plan Update

Staff Report Date: April 18, 2008

Background

The Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment (P&E) received the Sylvan Township Comprehensive Plan update on April 3, 2008. In accordance with the Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959 as amended, the County is to provide comments to the Township, which must include two statements of consistency:

- A statement as to whether, after considering any comments received by contiguous local units of government, the proposed update is consistent with the plan of contiguous communities; and
- A statement as to whether the proposed update is consistent with the County Plan.

The proposed update was reviewed for consistency with *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan). The Washtenaw County Department of Development Services, Department of Parks and Recreation, Road Commission, Department of Public Health, Office of the Drain Commissioner and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) were also given the opportunity to comment on the document.

Summary of Update in context of County Plan

The draft Sylvan Township Comprehensive Plan (Township Plan) includes valuable language supporting regional planning and intergovernmental cooperation. The section describing the surrounding land uses and zoning of adjacent jurisdictions shows consideration of the region's existing and future land uses. The potential for regional cooperation in service provision, including fire and police services, is mentioned briefly in the Township Plan. Goals such as those to support the Chelsea area identity and to manage growth in the Township by focusing it toward designated urban areas, as well as the emphasis on participating in regional solutions further speak to the importance of planning cooperatively to benefit the Township, as well as the neighboring communities.

An important step in preserving the rural character of Sylvan Township while supporting the character of Chelsea is the Township's commitment to limiting future growth to areas designated as urban and using natural features as a greenbelt boundary to this growth. The Township Plan mentions wetlands and otherwise unsuitable soils near the western and northern side of the City as a method of limiting the expansion of urban development

beyond the designated area. Combining this natural greenbelt with the policies for directing growth toward the designated Urban Service Area is supported by the Washtenaw County Comprehensive Plan goal of promoting an efficient pattern of development that “maintains our sense of place, preserves our natural resources and reduces the effects of sprawl” as well as Landscapes Recommendation 3.3 Urban Service Districts: Encourage villages and surrounding township to develop Urban Service Districts surrounding villages to plan for the water, sewer and transportation services needed for higher density development.

While the overall pattern for development described in the Township Plan corresponds to that recommended in the Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County, one discrepancy is the Rural Residential Area is set for a two acres minimum lot size, while the County Plan suggests this area to be a minimum lot size of five acres. (Washtenaw County Comprehensive Plan Figure 3-6: Recommended Potential Future Landscapes) This recommendation is founded on the increased ability to preserve rural character and agricultural operations when smaller lots are avoided. In addition to increasing minimum lot size or decreasing density in these areas, Sylvan Township should consider the use of other agricultural preservation tools in order to further protect both the rural character of the Township, as well as the viability of farming operations.

In order to accommodate projected population growth while protecting the farmland and natural resources which contribute to the rural character, the allowable density within the Urban Service Area could be increased in order to concentrate development in a way that provides for projected populations while preserving natural resources, allowing for more efficient use of services and infrastructure, and creating a strong community identity. Including policies which specifically encourage clustering may allow for flexibility and support sustainable development patterns.

Most of the Township is considered Rural Residential with a minimum lot size of two acres. Water and sanitary services are not planned to be extended into this area. The Residential Area Policies state that “residences in the designated rural residential area will coexist with operating farms in the foreseeable future” and that “it is expected that not all the land in the designated area will be needed for or converted to residential use during the next twenty years.” Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment is developing a build-out analysis tool which can be used by the Township to accurately predict future build-out patterns under a variety of scenarios. Washtenaw County is available to meet with the Township to discuss the tool and its uses.

Much of the agricultural area is also rural residential, with a minimum lot size for each dwelling unit of 2 acres. Map 3 illustrates areas with potential for long term agriculture, which are mainly in the southern corners of the Township, are generally in large parcels and are encouraged to continue as agriculture. However, the Township Plan does not specify whether the proposed 2 dwelling units per acre also apply to the area with potential for long term agriculture. While language supporting clustering may help protect agricultural areas and natural features, 2 acre minimums do little to encourage the long-term viability of farmland. There are a variety of agricultural preservation programs and tools available that could protect these areas from residential encroachment. The use of these preservation tools would compliment the established Urban Area Boundary as shown on Map 11 by focusing development away from areas well suited to agricultural

preservation. This would also enable the Township to better achieve the following objectives stated in the draft plan:

- 3.01 The Township's rural character should be preserved
- 3.02 The Township's natural features should be preserved
- 3.03 Long-term farming operations should be encouraged
- 3.04 Sylvan Township should support the Chelsea area identity
- 3.05 Sylvan Township's growth should be managed
- 3.06 The urban area should be clearly distinguished and separated from the rural part of Sylvan Township

The Township Plan does move toward the protection of these agricultural operations by including language supporting the use of Purchase of Development Rights programs. Additionally, Sylvan Township has an adopted Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Ordinance. This is supported by the County Plan Agricultural Objective 2: Encourage and support agricultural operations through farmland preservation programs. In order to be eligible for the MAPF (State PDR Program) the Township must have the five (5) required Agricultural Preservation Fund's Agricultural Preservation Components in its Comprehensive Plan, according to the MAPF Policies and Procedures. Sylvan Township could become an eligible township PDR program to the state program on its own, or join the County PDR Program through an Urban Cooperation Agreement. If Sylvan Township chooses to join the Washtenaw County PDR Program and keep its PDR ordinance, the Township's Comprehensive Plan will still need to include these five (5) Agricultural Preservation Components to in its Comprehensive Plan to be eligible to the State Program.

Of the five master plan requirements under the *Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund Policies and Procedures* to qualify for the State's PDR Program, Sylvan Township's Comprehensive Plan currently meets all the requirements for the program, except for Requirement #1. Both Map 10 and Map 3 identify "areas with potential for Long Term Agriculture, however, neither the "Agriculture" designation on Map 10 "Land Use Plan" nor the identification of "Areas with Potential for Long Term Agriculture" meet the requirements of being an "Agricultural Preservation" area. If the Township would like to include an "Agricultural Preservation" area to be eligible for the state PDR program, they are required to identify an "Agricultural Preservation Area" that includes all or portions of the "Agriculture" area on Map 10 "Land Use Plan." The Township could accomplish this in two different ways. Either by changing the land use plan category "Agriculture" on Map 10 "Land Use Plan" to "Agricultural Preservation" or by creating a new map, perhaps called Map 14 and titled "Agricultural Preservation Overlay Area" that serves as a overlay on top of Map 10, and described as such in the text of the Plan, and identifies all or portions of the "Agriculture" land use designation from Map 10 "Land Use Plan."

Attached to this document is a review of consistency of the Township Plan with the PDR program requirements with greater detail as to what is necessary for eligibility.

The Transportation section of the Township Plan includes both general policies and policies for specific roads. Important considerations are included, such as the minimization of curb cuts to order to improve traffic safety and to reduce the need for

additional lanes. Language is also included to make the transportation plans and road projects compatible with those in the City of Chelsea Plan.

Provisions for connectivity and safe pedestrian and bicycle movement are included. An example is the policy of having sidewalks on both sides of roads in the urban area. Requiring that “each development should provide its segment of the sidewalk and pedestrian path systems and extend these to property lines for future extension by subsequent developments” takes another step toward the development of these non-motorized systems. To further the goal of providing safe and comfortable walking and biking environments, the updated plan should incorporate provisions for pedestrian and bike pathways beyond sidewalks in urban areas. Critical community links and crossings between and to major destinations, including schools, stores and other gathering places should also be a priority, as well as providing opportunity for non-motorized recreation and addressing street patterns and lighting to make trips comfortable and pleasant. This point is supported by Washtenaw County Public Health.

Within the Urban Residential Area are a variety of housing types and densities. The policy to connect residential areas by local streets should be expanded to encourage pedestrian and bicycle friendly connections between and among residential areas, especially as they relate to neighborhood commercial and other amenities in order to allow the needs of residents to be met without reliance on automobile.

The Transportation section includes a policy that pedestrian and bicycle paths within the Township’s urban area will be coordinated with those of the City of Chelsea. While this consideration of regional role is to be commended, it is also important to reference the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) Non-motorized Plan and Transit Plan which provide a vision and framework for a county-wide non-motorized transportation system and transit system respectively. Also, public transit is not mentioned in the Township Plan. The service provided by Western-Washtenaw Area Value Express (WAVE) should be included.

Language is included regarding the impacts of pavement and other impervious surfaces on storm drainage and water quality. Limiting impervious surfaces while protecting natural features such as native vegetation and wetlands to provide storm water management functions can do a great deal to minimize the negative impacts of development on water quality. The Huron River Watershed Council developed a guidebook on using impervious surface and gravel road capacity to manage growth and protect water quality. The full guidebook can be found at the following link: http://www.hrwc.org/pdf/PAL_Guidebook.pdf.

The raising of a wind testing tower on the Chrysler proving grounds may soon show Sylvan Township to be well situated to support wind power development. Farmers can greatly benefit from wind power by negotiating rent payments for turbines situated on their land. Because of this fact, wind power can play a large role in helping farmland preservation programs as well as contributing to local taxes. For these reasons, Sylvan Township should encourage renewable energy technologies where appropriate. Sample Master Plan language on Energy Planning is attached.

It is mentioned in the general policies for natural features that streams and wetlands should be “protected from disturbance by construction and pollutants and sediment that

might be carried by surface water runoff.” Also noted is that certain lands are not considered suitable for future development if they “are not developable in their natural state.” This includes areas such as floodplains, wetlands and wet soil areas, and lands that are “essential to the continuity and preservation of natural systems.” This language specifically describing areas unsuitable for development is very inclusive, and could be further strengthened by creating a natural features overlay within which development projects may require more stringent standards and review.

Natural features maps included are surface drainage, soil associations and class, and groundwater recharge areas. Wetland and woodland maps should also be included to avoid confusion over areas appropriate for development. Map 8 illustrates class 2 and class 3 soils. The plan does not make clear what limitations these soil classes have. These limitations and how they are addressed through development restrictions or conservation practices should be included in the plan and highlighted on the Map for clarification.

The importance of a systems approach to protecting natural features is acknowledged in multiple sections of the Township Plan. One such example is that the plan considers wetlands to include the fringe area and notes the watershed also requires protection in order to have the quality of the wetland preserved. This comprehensive view of natural systems is echoed when speaking to the importance of protecting the slopes and vegetation along stream corridors. One potential small modification is to the statement that development of wetlands can be mitigated by replacing them with manmade features. It is worth noting here that, while this may help to mitigate the negative impact of developing wetlands, manmade features rarely provide natural functions for wildlife, groundwater recharge, and water quality to the degree that natural wetlands are able. For this reason, mitigation should be viewed as a last resort when preserving the natural wetland is deemed unfeasible.

Washtenaw County remains unique among southeastern Michigan counties with its high percentage of retained rural/agricultural spaces. More often than not, traditionally agricultural landscapes are often associated with historic buildings, sites, objects, and structures. The preservation of such historic resources has economic, environmental and social benefits. These worthwhile characteristics are recognized in Chapter Nine of the *Washtenaw County Comprehensive Plan*, which places significant value upon our irreplaceable historic resources. Recommendations 1.1 through 1.6 encourages the recognition of historic resources through the creation of local historic districts and listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as the application of innovative preservation strategies such as preservation easements and overlay districts. Federal and state tax credit programs are also a viable preservation strategy for many communities like Sylvan Township, as well as historic preservation easements. Furthermore, Recommendation 3.1 promotes the incorporation of historic resources in local master plan updates, while Recommendation 3.2 suggests historic resource education by local units of government.

Historic resources are integrated components of Sylvan Township’s rich, multi-dimensional building stock. They contribute to the community’s overall feeling and sense of place, and help define to the distinctive identity of this rural township’s residential and agricultural landscape. The Washtenaw County historic resources database on the web,

known as HistWeb, returned 80 individual historic sites recorded within Sylvan Township. Washtenaw County records also returned at least six designated Centennial Farms, sites which have been owned by the same family for at least one hundred years. These handsome landmarks and everyday structures are worthy of specific discussion in the development plan.

The Sylvan Township Proposed Draft Comprehensive Plan omits mention of the importance of such historic resources, and makes no provision for their careful use, recognition, preservation, or rehabilitation. In the face of development pressures, it is clear that not every historic building, site, object, and structure can be preserved. Sylvan Township would do well, however, to include language regarding the importance of historic preservation to the community's character, particularly the value of rural/agricultural sites, traditional landscapes, and infill development standards congruent with the current form and rhythm of the community.

Numerous communities in the Midwest and elsewhere with similar historic building stock have adopted a Historic Preservation Master Plan as an addendum or incorporated into an existing plan. At minimum, Sylvan Township should consider articulating a goal to seek protection and preservation of historic resources through local, state and national programs. If desired by Sylvan Township, Washtenaw County's historic preservation program is available for information and as source of assistance for the creation and implementation of measures to protect and reuse the community's irreplaceable historic resources.

Contiguous Community Land Uses

- East (Lima Township): According to the Lima Township Future Land Use Plan for the section along its border with the Sylvan Township is proposed as mostly agricultural use, with some large-lot rural residential just south of I-94, and with research/office use near the freeway.
- East (City of Chelsea): The current City of Chelsea Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2000, shows the land use along boundary between the city and Sylvan Township as predominately single-family residential, with higher density residential along the US-12 corridor. Industrial uses are planned to expand between the existing industrial park and Chelsea West Drive, and Commercial is proposed for the area surrounding the M-52 / I -94 interchange.
- North (Lyndon Township): Sylvan Township is bordered by Lyndon Township to the north. The adjacent portion of Lyndon Township is designated as agricultural/rural residential and recreation. These uses are compatible with those of Sylvan Township.
- South (Sharon Township): The land use designation along the border shared with Sylvan Township is agricultural or recreation/conservation. Large lot residential is allowed in these land use categories.

- West (Jackson County: Grass Lake Twp & Waterloo Township): The land use in Jackson County adjacent to Sylvan Township's western border is mostly agricultural, with some recreation/open space and some industrial use.
- Chelsea Area Regional Plan (Regional Plan): Major land uses in Sylvan are noted as recreation, rural residential and the Chrysler Proving Grounds. The Regional Plan shows a growth boundary between the western border to the City of Chelsea and Sylvan Township. Planned land uses in the Township Plan are generally consistent with those of the Chelsea Plan and Regional Plan.

Contiguous Community Comments

No comments were received.

Review of Plan in Context of Contiguous Community Master Plans

- East (Lima Township): Much of Lima Township is planned for Rural Residential and agricultural land uses with minimum lot sizes ranging from 1 – 5 acres.
- East (City of Chelsea): Both Sylvan Township and the City of Chelsea have the growth boundary in their Comprehensive Plans. Cooperation and coordination on this goal is essential to its success in supporting a vibrant city and protecting the rural character of the Township.
- North (Lyndon Township): Lyndon Township's General Land Use Development Plan envisions the township to remain largely public recreation and low density rural residential. Because of the shared interest in open space and recreation, the Lyndon Township and Sylvan Township should keep open communication lines regarding potential cooperation for natural features protection, open space preservation and the coordination of non-motorized trails.
- South (Sharon Township): Sharon Township is predominately low density housing, agricultural and open space. The planned future uses, as well as the general goals of Sharon Township are compatible with those of Sylvan Township.
- West (Jackson County): The dominate land use in the section of Jackson County adjacent to Sylvan Township is agricultural. The limited recreation/open space and industrial uses nearby do not threaten the goals of the Township Plan.
- Chelsea Area Regional Plan (Regional Plan): Major land uses including the growth boundary between the City and the Township are noted as such in both the Regional Plan and the Township Plan. Planned land uses and goals in the Township Plan are generally consistent with those of the Regional Plan.

Applicable County Department Comments

Statement of Consistency with State PDR-MARF: See attached

Recommended Energy Planning Plan Language: See attached

Washtenaw County Public Health: See attached

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS): See attached

Statement of Consistency with MAPF (State PDR Program)

Staff reviewed the amendments to the Sylvan Township Comprehensive Plan for consistency with *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan) and the *Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund (MAPF) Standards* (State PDR Standards):

- The proposed Lands Designated for Agricultural Preservation Overlay area may closely align with the Recommended Proposed Future Landscapes in the County Plan: Open Space and Rural (5+ acre lots), although see number “1. Requirement” below.
- Sylvan Township has an adopted Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance, which means to be eligible for the MAPF (State PDR Program) it must have the five (5) required Agricultural Preservation Fund’s Agricultural Preservation Components in its Comprehensive Plan, according to the MAPF Policies and Procedures. Sylvan Township could become an eligible township PDR program to the state program on its own, or join the County PDR Program through an Urban Cooperation Agreement. If Sylvan Township chooses to join the Washtenaw County PDR Program and keep its PDR ordinance, the Township’s Comprehensive Plan will still need to include these five (5) Agricultural Preservation Components to in its Comprehensive Plan to be eligible to the State Program.
- The amendments could make Sylvan Township eligible for the State of Michigan PDR Program, provided that the Township designates an area(s) within the Township as an “Agricultural Preservation Area” as outlined in Requirement #1 below. [Consistent with County Plan’s Agriculture Recommendation 2.1, Farmland Preservation Funding: Encourage landowners to apply for state and federal programs and encourage local governments to identify funding methods for farmland preservation including...PDR program].
- Below are the five master plan requirements under the *Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund Policies and Procedures* to qualify for the State’s PDR Program. Sylvan Township’s Comprehensive Plan currently meets all the requirements for the program, except for Requirement #1. Recommendations are provided below to position Sylvan Township to meet the requirements for the program.

1. Requirement: A New “Agricultural Preservation” Future Land Use Plan Category, Map Amendment

Discussion: This update includes an “Agriculture” designation on Map 10 “Land Use Plan.” This designation includes two areas, one of which is in the southeast part of the Township, south of I-94 and east of the Chrysler Proving Grounds (Sections 24, 25, 36 and portions of Sections 23, 26, and 35). The other area is in the southwest part of the Township and is generally west of Hoppe and Hayes Rds and south of I-94 (Sections 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, and portions of Sections 17, 18, and 32). Additionally Map 3 identifies “Areas with Potential for Long Term Agriculture.” These areas on both maps identifies generally where agricultural uses are to occur in the Township, however, neither the “Agriculture” designation on Map 10 “Land Use Plan” nor the identification of “Areas with Potential for Long Term Agriculture” meet the requirements of being an “Agricultural Preservation” area. If the Township would like to include an “Agricultural Preservation” area to be eligible for the state PDR program, they are required to identify an “Agricultural Preservation Area” that includes all or portions of the “Agriculture” area

on Map 10 “Land Use Plan.” The Township could accomplish this in two different ways. Either by changing the land use plan category “Agriculture” on Map 10 “Land Use Plan” to “Agricultural Preservation” or by creating a new map, perhaps called Map 14 and titled “Agricultural Preservation Overlay Area” that serves as an overlay on top of Map 10, and described as such in the text of the Plan, and identifies all or portions of the “Agriculture” land use designation from Map 10 “Land Use Plan.”

2. Requirement: PDR and Other Agricultural Preservation Strategies (Policies) must be included in the Goals, Objectives, Policies Section of the Comprehensive Plan

Discussion: Text referring to the strategies intended to preserve agricultural land should include PDR, but also other techniques. Sylvan Township’s Comprehensive Plan contains within the “Agricultural Area Policies” under Sections 8.01 on pages 21 and 22, policies which address farmland preservation. Among the policies on pages 21 and 22 include:

- A. The Township specifically encourages use of purchase of development rights programs to preserve agricultural operations.
- B. Clustering of units is encouraged in these areas to maximize the land area that will not be developed.
- D. Public water and sanitary sewer services will not be extended into the designated agricultural areas.

All of these policies meet with the state PDR requirements, provided that any reference to “agricultural areas” should be changed to a newly named “Agricultural Preservation” land use plan category or overlay map category as described in Requirement #1.

Additionally, the designation of an Urban Land Use Plan category within the Township near the City of Chelsea is also an important strategy for directing growth away from agricultural areas in the Township. These policies also fit in with the Agriculture strategies found in Chapter 4 of *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County*.

3. Requirement: Include a paragraph describing why farmland should be preserved in Sylvan Township.

Discussion: The text on pages 5 and 6 under Section 2.05, on page 17 under Section 3.03 and on page 20 under Section 4.05 meet this requirement. In Section 3.03 in the beginning sentence of the “Long-Term Farming Operations Should be Encouraged” section that meets this requirement quite well. The reasons include that farming is important to the local and regional economies and the reasonable prospect of continued agricultural productivity within the Township.

4. Requirement: A paragraph describing why the new “Agricultural Preservation” future land use plan category, was chosen/designated.

Discussion: The text in Section 5.01.A. on page 21 states reasons for its designation of the “Agricultural Areas:”

“These lands are predominantly in agricultural use, have productive soils, and are generally in large parcels.”

While the titling of the land use category of “Agriculture” for the two areas does not meet the state PDR requirements, these reasons for selecting the Agricultural Areas do fit in very well with the state’s PDR requirements, provided that the land use plan category changes to “Agricultural Preservation” on Map 10 and/or the narrative above in Section 5.01.A is used for a newly created “Agricultural Preservation Overlay Area” Map as described in Requirement #1.

5. Requirement: Farmland preservation goal(s).

Discussion: The objective found under Section 3.03 on page 17 serves as the required farmland preservation goals. It states the following: “Long-term farming should be encouraged. Farming is important to local and regional economies. Preservation of farmland will create a reserve of productive lands.” The policies on page 21 and 22 also support this objective.

Washtenaw County is well versed in the State PDR Program and would be a willing partner to assist the Township in implementing these recommendations.



Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment

Energy Planning

Over the last 10 years, the United States has seen some rather dramatic changes in the world energy market. First, as the supplies of natural gas and petroleum become increasingly sparse, the prices of these commodities have gone up dramatically. Transportation fuel prices have gone up so dramatically that airlines are going out of business, and domestic automakers which have been reliant on the sales of inefficient cars are seriously hurting. The effects of these ailing manufacturers can be felt throughout Michigan, which has had one of the highest unemployment rates in the Country for a few years running.

Secondly, it is now a well documented fact that greenhouse gasses from human sources are causing our planet to heat up, which is having devastating effects on our natural environment. Nearly half of the Carbon Dioxide that is emitted into the atmosphere from the U.S. comes from Coal fired power plants that provide electricity to our homes. Finally, the nation has become highly aware of the security issues we face due to our reliance on Oil from places which aren't friendly to American interests. In the past year, both the State and Washtenaw County have begun initiatives to develop renewable energies to help reduce our carbon footprint and create jobs in an emerging field. Targeted investments in different renewable energy resources and technologies are widely believed to have great benefits for the future.

Specifically, it may soon be shown that Sylvan Township is well situated to support wind power development. It has relatively high elevations, it has a large electrical transmission infrastructure and it has a lot of wide-open land. Farmers can greatly benefit from wind power by negotiating rent payments for turbines situated on their land. Because of this fact, wind power can play a large role in helping farmland preservation programs as well as contributing to local taxes. For these reasons, it is imperative that Sylvan Township embrace renewable energy technologies whenever possible.



**Public Health Checklist for Review / Comment of
Washtenaw County Planning Documents**

	Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not Applicable To this review
1. The plan includes elements that increase access to physical activity.				
A. Opportunities for use of non-motorized transportation are evident in the plan (bikeability, walkability, Multi-use paths)	1	3	5 [√]	N/A
B. Connectivity between schools and residential areas are promoted in the Plan (Safe Routes to School).	1	3	5	N/A [√]
C. Preservation of green/open Space including parks is Evident in this plan.	1	3	5 [√]	N/A

Comments: _Good recognition of the importance of preserving open spaces and natural features. Walking and biking paths adequately addressed for urban areas, especially for recreation purposes. Should also consider the value of connecting pathways for non-motorized transportation to stores and schools.

	Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not Applicable To this review
2. The plan includes elements that increase access to healthy eating resources.				
A. The plan promotes mixed use development (retail including access to grocery stores and residential).	1	3 [√]	5	N/A
B. Grocery stores and super-markets can be accessed by non-motorized transportation.	1 [√]	3	5	N/A
C. The plan includes elements that support or improves the local food system (including preservation of agricultural land / urban agriculture and community gardens)	1	3	5 [√]	N/A

Comments: It is clear that promoting agriculture and preserving agricultural land is important to the Township. Public Health is very supportive of maintaining a diverse local food supply. It is also important that people have access to healthy foods, and that in the more urban areas, markets can be reached by walking or biking.

	Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not Applicable To this review
3. The plan includes elements that promote emotional well-being and social connectivity.				
A. The plan includes elements that promote the use of, and access to, public transportation.	1	3	5	N/A ✓
B. The plan includes elements that promote connectivity between residential development and retail.	1	3 ✓	5	N/A
C. The plan incorporates affordable housing options into residential developments.	1	3 ✓	5	N/A
D. The plan includes built elements that increase community cohesion and neighborhood activities.	1	3 ✓	5	N/A

Comments: _____

References:

- 1) Washtenaw County Public Health comments for Environment and Planning Master Plan.
- 2) Design guidelines for Active Michigan Communities, 2006.
- 3) Robert Wood Johnson: Active Living Research
 - a. Designing for Active Recreation: February 2005
 - b. Designing for Active Transportation: February 2005

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WASHTENAW AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

705 NORTH ZEEB ROAD 2ND FLOOR
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48103-1560
PHONE: (734) 994-3127 FAX: (734) 994-3129
WEBSITE: WWW.MIWATS.ORG
E-MAIL: WATS@MIWATS.ORG

Planning Reviews

Community: Sylvan Township

Date Received: April 9, 2008

Complete Master Plan Update: x

Complete Zoning Plan Update:

Master Plan Amendment:

Zoning Plan Amendment:

Other: Growth Management Plan Update

Sections reviewed: Goals (objectives) Policies Land Use Recommendations
 Transportation Recommendations Other

General Comments:

Many of the maps provided were not referenced in the document. Provision of a color copy of the maps (electronically) would have been more useful for the review.

The Plan includes thoughtful consideration of the adjoining communities particularly their plans and their land use.

Land Use Implications:

Many of the recommendations will result in suburban development not rural or urban. Consider use of an Urban Service District to identify urban portion of the Township.

Transportation Component Implications:

Consider incorporation of the WATS Non-motorized Plan by reference or by inclusion of specific policies. Consider incorporation of WATS Transit Plan by reference.

POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- CITY OF ANN ARBOR • ANN ARBOR TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY • ANN ARBOR TOWNSHIP • CITY OF CHELSEA • VILLAGE OF DEXTER •
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- CITY OF SALINE • SCIO TOWNSHIP • SOUTHWEST WASHTENAW COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS • SUPERIOR TOWNSHIP • UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN •
- WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS • WASHTENAW COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION • CITY OF YPSILANTI • YPSILANTI TOWNSHIP •
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AN INTERMUNICIPALITY COMMITTEE ORGANIZED UNDER ACT 200 OF PUBLIC ACTS OF MICHIGAN (1957)
REPRESENTING WASHTENAW COUNTY

Comments by Section:

- 2.08 Housing, Page 27: it would be helpful to provide the percent increase in addition to the number increase each year. Although the building permit information is a good indication of activity, a table similar to Table 2 (Population 1940 to 2000) would also be useful.
- 2.11 Affordable Housing, page 28: The last sentence is missing either “number” or “percent” after the word significant.
- 3.06 Objectives, page 37: The township does not have an officially designated “urban area” and it should consider using phrasing such as “urban portion of the township or the urban services district” so as not to confuse readers. This terminology occurs throughout the document. See: 4.03, 4.04, 4.09
- 5.01 Agricultural Area Policies, B, page 40: Although the very first objective of the Township is to preserve the Rural Character of the Township (3.01) and the third is to Encourage Long-Term Farming Operations (3.03) setting the minimum lot size in the Agricultural Area Policies will encourage a suburban development and will not maintain the rural character nor encourage long-term farming.
- 5.01 Agricultural Area Policies, G, page 41: The use of two acres again will not preserve the natural characteristics. The township should consider 10-20 acres for lot sizes in the Agricultural Area.
- 5.02 Residential Area Policies, B, page 41: The provision of rural residential is essential to good planning but the lot size of 2 acre minimum is suburban not rural. See also 5.02 E, 5.02 H. Lot sizes with significantly higher minimums should be considered to preserve the rural character. A good rule of thumb is urban lots are 4 or more DU’s per acre, suburban lots are between 1 and 5 to 10 acres and rural are 10 to 80 acres.
- 5.02 Residential Area Policies, L, page 43: The residential areas should also have sidewalks and interconnecting pathways to adjacent residential or commercial areas.
- 5.03 Commercial Area Policies, E and I, page 44: Providing connecting pathways to adjacent land uses will reduce the amount of vehicular traffic.
- 6.01 General Policies, C. page 47: The roads in the urban “area” should also have connecting sidewalks and roads in the rural area should have 4 foot or greater paved shoulders to accommodate non-motorized movements.
- 6.02 Policies for Specific Roads, C, page 48: Old US-12 near the City of Chelsea and the urban portion should have paved shoulders if there is no curb and gutter and should have sidewalks and possibly bike lanes. The rural portion should have paved shoulders for non-motorized

movements. The same holds true for Cavanaugh Lake Road, Scio Church Road, Bush/Sibley, Pierce Road, Kalmbach/Fahrner. Brown Road should have both sidewalks and bike paths. Policies for Specific Roads, D, page 48: See C above for comments for non-motorized facilities on all rural collectors and above classification.

- 6.03 Pedestrian/Bicycle Facilities, F, page 49: The Township should consider incorporation of the County's Non-motorized plan in addition to coordinating with the City of Chelsea.
- 7.02 On-site Water and Sanitary Sewer Facilities, page 53: The township should consider allowing on-site treatment facilities only if land in the sewer service area is no longer available for development in order to protect the rural character and natural features of the township.