



Washtenaw County
Department of Planning & Environment

September 4, 2008

DRAFT

Richard Murphy, Planner II
Planning and Development Department
City of Ypsilanti
One South Huron Street
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

RE: City of Ypsilanti, Master Plan Amendment

Dear Mr. Murphy:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment to the City of Ypsilanti Master Plan. In accordance with the Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 285 of 1931 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 City is seeking review and comment on an amendment to the City of Ypsilanti Master Plan that would change text for the Water Street Target Area and the future land use designations for the following:

1. Revises the Future Land Use designations within the Water Street Area
2. Revises the boundaries of the East Michigan Avenue and Water Street Target Areas
3. Revises the text of the Water Street Target Area

The text changes to the Water Street Target Area section includes redevelopment goals for the Target Area, as well possible zoning changes that would meet the redevelopment goals for the Target Area.

Based on the staff review of the proposed update in the context of the County Plan, it is determined that the amendment is consistent with the County Plan.

Specifically, the plan is consistent with *Landscapes Recommendation 1.1, Urban Infill Development Character and Design, Landscapes Recommendation 1.3 Urban Auto Dependent Uses, Parks and Recreation Recommendation 2.2, Huron River Border-to-Border Trail, and Parks and Recreation Recommendation 2.4, Railroads and River Corridors*. The proposed amendment is also consistent with the plans of contiguous local units of government.

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:

- Consider adding language to the amendment that recommends low-impact design and stormwater best management practices during the site-plan review process, as the Water Street Area is in close proximity to the Huron River as supported by the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner recommendations.
- Consider adding language that identifies a grocery store and community gardens as potential and encouraged uses for the area.
- Consider adding language on the designation of park nodes within the Water Street Area.
- Consider adding language that identifies the railway bed on the site potentially for preservation into a bike path connecting downtown and the new development to the Depot Town area.
- Consider adding language that identifies an esthetically balanced entryway overlay area into the downtown (as supported by WATS recommendations) that could include: zoning changes with consistent setback, landscaping, and signage requirements; changes to the roadway; enhancements such as a provision of bike facilities on Michigan Avenue and signage to alert drivers of increased pedestrian activity; as well as way-finding signs (if not already in place) along city entryways that would help eliminate confusion on the roadway, as well as generate interest in the city's amenities.

The attached staff report provides additional detail and background regarding County comments. Additionally, agency comments are provided containing additional detailed recommendations and should be reviewed and considered. 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 City as you work to implement the policies included in your plan, please call me at (734) 222-6888.

Sincerely,

Patricia Denig
Director of Planning Services
Department of Planning and Environment

Attachments

Staff Report

Washtenaw County Department of Public Health Comments

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) comments

Cc: Superior Township
Ypsilanti Township



Staff Report

RE: City of Ypsilanti, Master Plan Amendment – Washtenaw County Review

Date: August 12, 2008

Background

Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment (P&E) received the draft amendments from the City of Ypsilanti on July 23, 2008. In accordance with the Municipal Planning Act, Public Act 285 of 1931 as amended, the County is to provide comments to the City, 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 the County Plan. The Washtenaw County Division 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/Review in context of County Plan

The proposed amendment involves both the Water Street Target Area and the East Michigan Avenue Target Area on pages 82 through 83. The Water Street Area of the City is identified as a target area for redevelopment. The goals for the area include the removal of unattractive commercial and industrial uses; the remediation of environmental contamination; extending the central business district; improved access along the Huron River; as well as increasing residential density near downtown and Depot Town.

The amendment includes the following:

1. Revises the Future Land Use designations within the Water Street Area
2. Revises the boundaries of the East Michigan Avenue and Water Street Target Areas
3. Revises the text of the Water Street Target Area

The reason for the change in designation is due to the City of Ypsilanti now owning 38 acres of the Water Street Area and the Water Street Target Area designation since the 1998 Master Plan was adopted and as proposed will only include these 38 acres owned by the City. The amendment also includes text which indicates that

redevelopment of the site is now possible due to unified land control, the completion of an environmental assessment of the site, as well as partial remediation and demolition that has occurred on the site. Additionally, the amendment also proposes to eliminate an overlap of the East Michigan Avenue Target Area with the Water Street Target Area located along the south side of East Michigan Avenue from the Huron River on the west to Park Street on the east. The south side of East Michigan Avenue along that stretch is proposed to be only a part of the Water Street Target Area. The Community Commercial designation along that part of East Michigan Avenue in the Water Street Target Area are designated as Mixed Residential/Commercial in the Water Street Target Area.

The amendment also includes revisions to the text of the Land Use Recommendations of the Water Street Target Area section. The text changes include a broadening of the possible uses for the site from a mix of residential and commercial, to a "broad range of uses that capitalize on the site's location in regards to Michigan Avenue" which could also be inclusive of residential and commercial uses. The text also includes the possibility of having either a development proposal for the entire site or development proposals for portions of the site. The text also includes the rezoning of the Water Street Area to incorporate the goals of the Master Plan goals for the target area, and to provide developers with the maximum predictability during the development process.

The text has been changed from identifying Planned Unit Development (PUD) as the appropriate zoning, to not only being inclusive of PUD as a possibility, but also establishing a new zoning district or an overlay district as well as possible changes to existing zoning districts. This proposed change in zoning designation possibilities for the Target Area in the Master Plan is to help facilitate predictability as well as to achieve the Master Plan goals for the Target Area. The appropriate zoning districts for the Water Street Target Area are also identified, which include new "Commercial/Residential Redevelopment Districts," B-3 Central Business District Zoning, R/C Residential Commercial District, RO Residential Office District, as well as specialized-craft industrial uses as found in the W/S Workshop Studio District.

Additionally, the amendment eliminates 9 parcels being designated as Parks in the southeast corner of the Target Area. However, the amendment designated a Park corridor along the edge of the Huron River in the Target Area, which the text of the amendment indicates that at a minimum this park corridor is designated as a linear park with biking/walking trail provided along the river, and larger nodes may be included at points along this linear park.

Among the goals that the development proposal and rezoning should achieve include the following:

- Redevelopment of the site, including a mix of residential, retail, office, entertainment, or other land uses or combinations compatible with the downtown business district.
- Coordination of individual development projects to ensure compatibility both within the site and with nearby land uses.

- Effective transportation connections to the downtown business district and surrounding areas, including non-motorized, vehicular, and transit options.
- Expansion and enhancement of public access to the Huron River.

The Water Street Area is contained within the Urban Landscape of the County Plan, as illustrated in Figure 3-6: Recommended Potential Future Landscapes on page 3-10 of the County Plan. The range of residential densities for the Urban Landscape is from single- to multi-family developments with an average of 12 units per acre. The proposed Mixed Use Residential/Commercial designation for the Water Street Area complies with the County Urban Landscape designation. The City's Master Plan allows single, two family and medium density multiple-family housing as a permitted use in the Mixed Use Residential/Commercial definitions. According to the City Master Plan, these categories range in densities from five (5) to twenty (20) units per acre.

The amendments are consistent with the County's Comprehensive plan including *Landscapes Recommendation 1.1, Urban Infill Development Character and Design*, and *Landscapes Recommendation 1.3, Urban Auto Dependent Uses*, which encourages infill development within urban centers and seek to promote transit opportunities. Additionally, the amendments are also consistent with *Parks and Recreation Recommendation 2.2, Huron River Border-to-Border Trail*, and *Parks and Recreation Recommendation 2.4, Railroads and River Corridors*, due to the designation of the linear park along the Huron River within the Target Area which provides a corridor for the Border-to-Border Trail and could link existing segments of the trail.

Map Attachments

Future Land Use Changes Current and Proposed for the Water Street Target Area:
See Attached

East Michigan Target Area See Attached

Contiguous Community Land Uses

Not applicable.

Contiguous Community Comments

None received.

Applicable County Department Comments

Washtenaw County Public Health: See attached

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS): See attached

Washtenaw County Drain Commission (WCDC): See attached

FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS – CURRENT AND PROPOSED

Figure 1 – Current Master Plan Designations

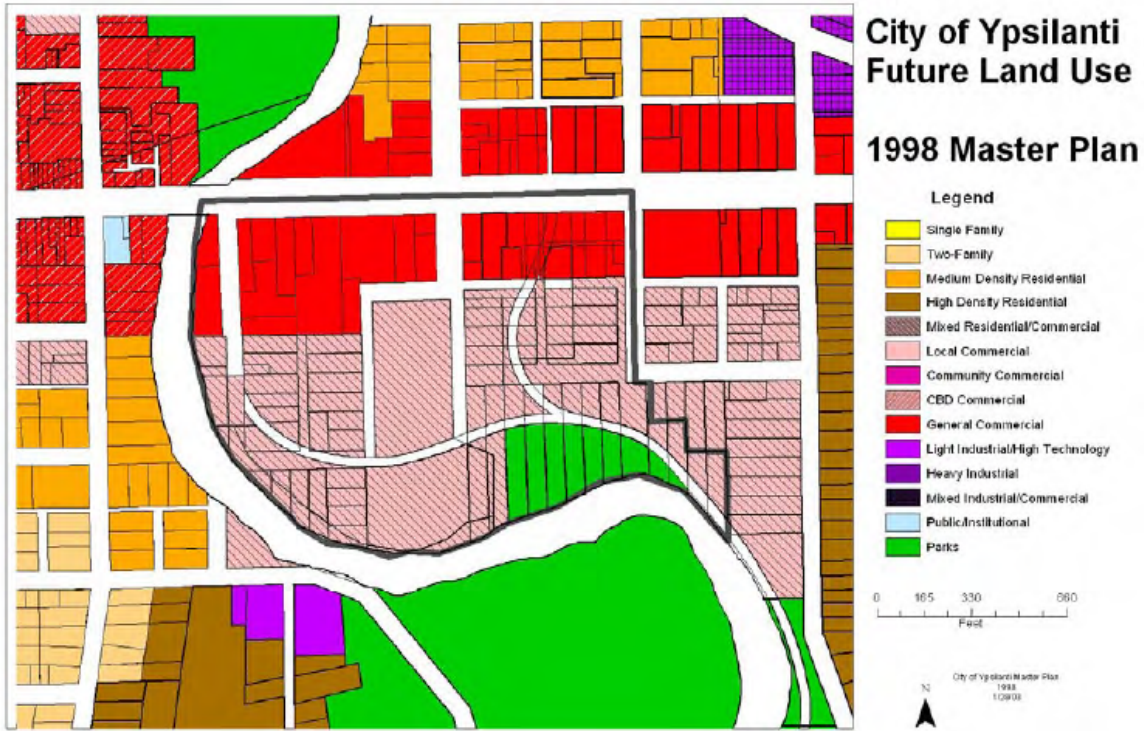
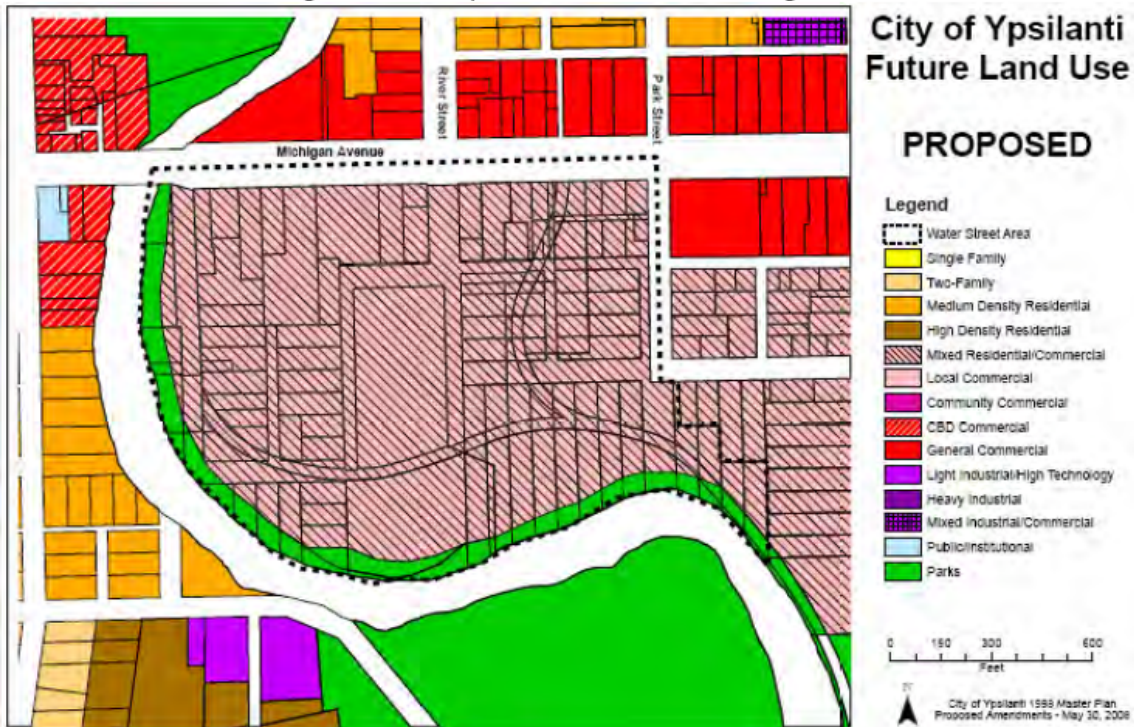
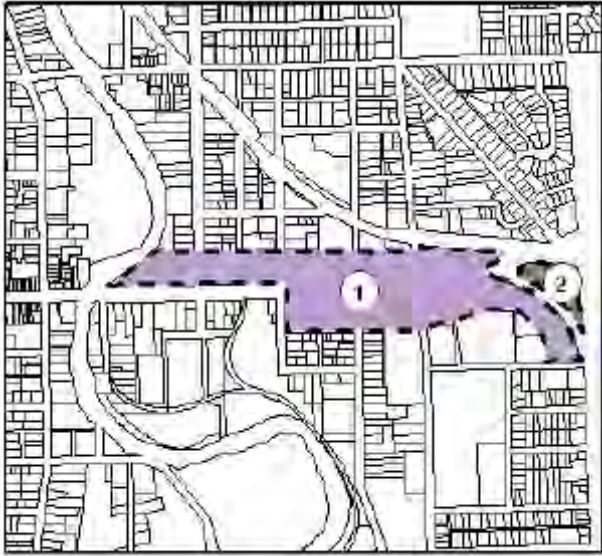


Figure 2 – Proposed Master Plan Designations





East Michigan Avenue Area



**Public Health Review and Comment for:
City of Ypsilanti Master Plan Amendment**

1. The plan includes elements that **increase access to physical activity.**

Applicable		Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not
review					To this
A.	Opportunities for use of non-motorized transportation are evident in the plan (bikeability, walkability, multi-use paths).	1	3	<u>5</u>	N/A
B.	Connectivity between schools and residential areas are promoted in the plan (Safe Routes to School).	1	3	5	<u>N/A</u>
C.	Preservation of green/open space including parks is evident in this plan.	1	3	<u>5</u>	N/A

General Comments: In the Water Street section of the plan, biking/walking path in Riverside Park linking downtown and Depot Town is an important characteristic to include in the amended master plan.

Also, zoning changes to promote transit and non-motorized transportation are encouraged by Washtenaw County Public Health. Maintaining parkland (Water Street section) is an excellent resource to encourage physical activity for Ypsilanti residents of all ages.

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2. The plan includes elements that **increase access to healthy eating resources.**

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

General Comments: Good integrate of mixed-use developments in the amendments with proximity of residential and commercial; however, no guarantee that any of the commercial development would help increase access to food / healthy food for those living and work in the City of Ypsilanti. There is a lack of full service grocery stores within the city limits of Ypsilanti.

There is no mention of space for urban and community gardens in the plan, which is one specific way in which community food insecurity could be addressed within the city limits.

3. The plan includes elements that **promote emotional well-being and social connectivity.**

Applicable review	Not Addressed	Somewhat Addressed	Adequately Addressed	Not To this
A. The plan includes elements that promote the use of, and access to, public transportation.	1	3	<u>5</u>	N/A

B. The plan includes elements that promote connectivity between residential development and retail.	1	3	<u>5</u>	N/A
C. The plan incorporates affordable housing options into residential developments.	1	<u>3</u>	5	N/A
D. The plan includes built elements that increase community cohesion and neighborhood activities.	1	3	<u>5</u>	N/A

General Comments: Commercial/residential developments are included in the amended plan; however, no mention of affordable housing specifically. Very good integration of transit options and non-motorized transportation. Maintaining existing/ increasing parkland and mixed use developments promote community cohesion and are encouraged by Washtenaw County Public Health.

References:

- 1) Washtenaw County Public Health comments for Environment and Planning Master Plan.
- 2) Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities (2006). Available at: www.mihealthtools.org/communities
- 3) Promoting Active Communities (PAC). Available at: www.mihealthtools.org/communities
- 4) Robert Wood Johnson: Active Living Research
 - a. Designing for Active Recreation (Updated February 2005).
 - b. Designing for Active Transportation (Updated February 2005)
 Available at: http://www.activelivingresearch.org/index.php/What_We_are_Learning/117

WATS Planning Reviews

Community: City of Ypsilanti

Date Received: July 25, 2008

Complete Master Plan Update:

Complete Zoning Plan Update:

Master Plan Amendment: X

Zoning Plan Amendment:

Other: Growth Management Plan Update

Sections reviewed: Goals Policies Land Use Recommendations

Transportation Recommendations Other

General Comments:

This amendment to the city's master plan at times reads as a plan to plan often discussing what could be included in the plan and other times like a zoning amendment speaking specifically to zoning changes. I think if these issues are resolved this plan will serve both Ypsilanti and Washtenaw County well.

Transportation Component Implications:

Water Street Site

Designating river frontage as parkland with biking and walking trails brings another portion of the county Border to Border Trail into alignment, and is a recommendation of the Non-Motorized Plan for Washtenaw County. This change to designated parkland on the Water Street site provides the Border to Border Trail greater downtown access for both non-motorized commuters and recreation enthusiasts who may consider relocating to Ypsilanti. Additionally, the existing railway bed on the site could be considered for preservation into a bike path connecting downtown and the new development to the Depot Town area. Funding for such a project may be available through TEA-21 funds. The City should consider language that specifically calls out a grocery store as a desirable retail use for the Water street site that would provide benefits for the entire City. Proposed changes should also be more specific in designating any desired park nodes on the site; i.e. a certain continuous percentage of the site will be designated public open space.

Entryway Overlay Zone

Along with zoning changes to create an esthetically balanced entryway into downtown such as consistent setback, landscaping, and signage requirements, changes to roadway should be considered as well. Enhancements such as a provision of bike facilities on Michigan Avenue and signage to alert drivers of increased pedestrian activity could be productive. Way-finding signs (if not already in place) along city entryways would help eliminate confusion on the roadway, as

well as generate interest in the city's amenities.

August 11, 2008

To: Planning Advisory Board

From: Dennis M. Wojcik, P.E.; Chief Deputy Drain Commissioner

Re: City of Ypsilanti Master Plan Revisions, Water Street Redevelopment Area

It is recommended that language be added to the revisions that would indicate the importance of environmentally sensitive development due to the Water Street Area being in close proximity to the Huron River. Low impact design should be stressed in this area and any redevelopment should require storm water best management practices be utilized.

If you have any questions in this regard please contact me.