

NAPP Application ● Staff Report ● N-24-2008

Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board

Date Received: November 10, 2008

N-24-2008

TOWNSHIP: York

LOCATION: The 79.3 acre site is located along Mooreville Road, west of Platt Road. in Section 34 of York Township. Ann, James and Jay Houston, the property owners, are applying to the Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP), requesting that the County purchase this property under NAPP.

REASON FOR PAB REVIEW: Natural Areas Preservation Program Committee Ordinance No. 128 requires that the Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board provide an advisory opinion on the applications submitted to the program.

BACKGROUND: The Houston Property site proposed for the NAPP program is 79.3 acres. The Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission is considering the opportunity of buying this parcel.

STAFF COMMENTS

1. The application's impact on long-range planning

According to the Charter Township of York Growth Management Plan (Township Plan), the long-range planning for this parcel is Consent Judgement Residential. *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan) designates this parcel as Rural with a small amount of Open Space. Staff believes that the use of this site for passive recreation and/or open space does not conflict with the long range planning for the area.

2. Existing land use of the property and adjacent properties

According to SEMCOG 2005, the land use on this parcel is currently active agriculture and grassland/shrub land. The surrounding land use around this parcel includes active agriculture to the north and west, and woodland/wetlands to the east. According to the application, there are no easements on the property. Staff believes that an open space use on this parcel does not conflict with surrounding land uses.

3. Current zoning of the property and surrounding properties

The zoning designation for this site is Conservation/Preservation and Essential Agriculture. The surrounding zoning designations are also Conservation/ Preservation and Essential Agricultural Districts.

According to the Charter Township of York Zoning Ordinance (Township Ordinance), the intent of the Essential Agricultural District is: "...to preserve, for agricultural activity, to the greatest extent possible." The intent of the Conservation Preservation District, of which most of the applicant parcels are composed, is to "protect and enhance the natural resources, natural amenities, natural habitats of wildlife, watershed and reservoir areas, agricultural capability, public recreation...". Permitted uses in these districts include open space, agriculture, and public or private preserve, park or conservation area.

The use of this property either for passive recreation, open space, or a conservation area does not appear to conflict with the Township Ordinance.

4. Compliance with Master Plans

The Washtenaw County Land Use Plan maps the area as Rural and Open Space. The County Plan describes Rural areas as "recognized for agricultural operations, parklands and vast open spaces." Open Space areas, according to the County Plan, "can refer to grasslands, stands of trees, swampy lowland, or a park." Further, the County Plan states that "preserving large tracts of natural ecosystems and linkages between these ecosystems are an important part of developing an open space plan. Preserving these areas has positive impacts on air quality, ecological systems, habitats, natural corridors, scenic vistas and water quality. Corridors and natural connections between ecosystems provide a natural flow that stands in stark contrast to small isolated pockets of open space leftover from developments that disrupt natural water systems or trap wildlife."

According to the Township Plan, the site is designated as Consent Judgement Residential, which is not described in detail in the Plan except that these areas near the City of Milan contain residential densities.

Staff concludes that overall, the passive recreational and open space use on these parcels do not conflict with either the County land use policies or the Township Plan.

5. Impact on fragile lands/natural resources

According to Washtenaw County data, the site has a river through the property, with wetlands and woodlands on much of the property. According to the application, surveys by recognized experts or an environmental assessment by a qualified consultant have not been performed.

6. Impact on infrastructure and community as a whole

The Township Plan indicate that this area is within the Urban Service Overlay. This area is intended to accommodate urban residential, commercial, office and research/technology in the future. It is noted that the development within these districts "shall only be permitted where adverse impact to natural features will be avoided. Natural features located within the Urban Service Districts shall be preserved." The Township Plan further states that "the intent of the Urban Service Districts are not to seek expanded development" but are a response to the possibility of future development near highway interchanges and existing urban areas.

The Township is presently patrolled by the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department. York Township is served by both the Saline and Milan Fire Departments, the nearest of which is located within a mile to the east.

This parcel appears to be significant for its natural feature value and does not appear to impact on public and community services.

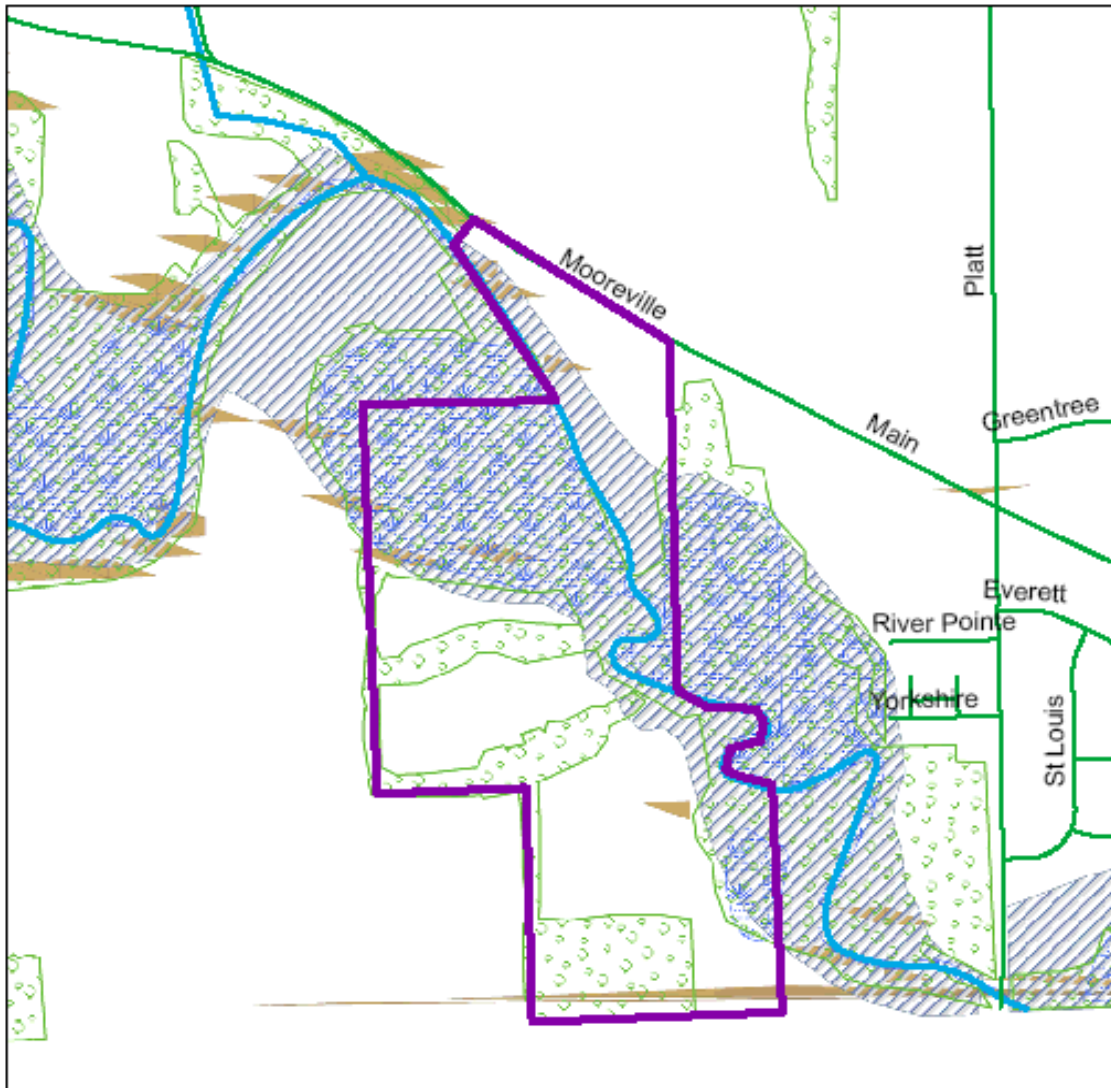
Access to the site would be provided from Mooreville Rd. Many of the Township's roads are local gravel, although the portion of Mooreville Rd on which the property is located is paved. Traffic counts data have indicated substantial increases in average daily traffic counts on Township roads. As growth and development continues in and around York Township, daily traffic will increase on area roads. If any additional access drives are developed, staff recommends that Access Management Standards, as developed by MDOT or the County Road Commission be consulted.

Conclusion

This area is very important for water quality and stormwater management, since there are floodplains, wetlands and for the preservation of the woodlands and general open space.

In conclusion, based on the observations above, it is the opinion of the Washtenaw County Planning and Environment Department Staff that this parcel for the Natural Areas Preservation Program does not conflict with any land use plans nor the zoning ordinance.

Houston Property



NAPP REVIEW

• **STAFF REPORT** •

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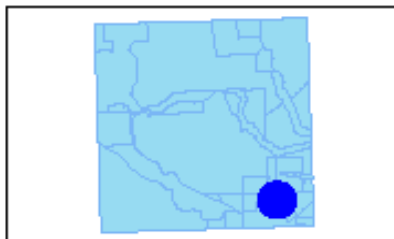
Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment

YORK TOWNSHIP – NATURAL FEATURES

0 550 1,100 Feet

Legend

- Roads
- River
- Woodlands
- Wetlands
- Steep Slope



York Township

