



Washtenaw County  
Department of Planning & Environment

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November 14, 2008

Doug Fuller, Secretary  
Scio Township Planning Commission  
827 N. Zeeb Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Re: Scio Township Master Land Use Plan Update

Dear Mr. Fuller:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Scio Township Master Land Use Plan Update. In accordance with the Municipal Planning Enabling Act, Public Act 33 of 2008, the update was reviewed by the 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.

**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 Scio Township Master 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:**

- Scio Township should articulate a goal to seek protection and preservation of historic resources through local, state and national historic designation or easement programs, all of which employ design guidelines and review to ensure appropriate treatment of historic properties.
- The plan should provide additional language to describe “How and Why the Township’s Agricultural Preservation Area Plan Overlay was selected” which is one of the five State PDR Program requirements. One suggestion is to use the language that described the “Agricultural Unit” in the 2005 amended Scio Township Master Plan (originally adopted in 1996), for further describing “how and why the agricultural preservation area was selected,” as well as to indicate that the Agricultural Preservation Area Plan Overlay contains most of the Prime Agricultural Soils.

**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:**

- Portions of Appendix A, especially maps including both planned and proposed information, would be better if incorporating into the body of the Plan.
- Figure 1: Existing Land Use Map has some inaccuracies as the map was likely created using 2000 data. This map should be updated to current land uses or the year of data depicted in the map should be more clearly identified.
- The Transportation Plan section functions more as an inventory, describing the existing transportation network and National Functional Classification system. While this can be used to identify areas that the Township expects to develop and those areas that the Township would like to preserve, it does not specify goals and policies for implementation.
- Reference the Washtenaw Metro Alliance Plan for Coordinated Parkland and Open Space in the Master Plan and adopt the policies and goals included in the document.
- Include the WATS Non-motorized and Transit Plans by reference and accordingly adopt the policies and goals included in the documents.
- The Draft Plan is remarkable in commitment to LEED and Low Impact Design principles in the majority of sub areas. These policies should be extended to the Jackson Road corridor as well.

The attached staff report provides additional background regarding county comments and agency comments are provided containing additional detailed recommendations. 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 Director  
Department of Planning and Environment  
Washtenaw County

Attachments

Staff Report

Washtenaw County Historic Preservation

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS)

Washtenaw County Drain Commission



## Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment

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### Staff Report

RE: Scio Township Master Land Use Plan Update

Staff Report Date: November 14, 2008

### Background

The Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment (P&E) received the Scio Township Master Land Use Plan Update on October 15, 2008. In accordance with the Municipal Planning Enabling Act Public Act 33 of 2008, 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, as
- 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/Review in context of County Plan

The Land Use Goals of the Township Plan generally support those found within the County Plan, and aim to “foster responsible use of land, preserve farmland and natural features, and to make best use of existing public services, utilities, and infrastructure.” Many components of the Township Plan includes language supportive of maintaining open space and rural characteristics where appropriate, while allowing growth to be accommodated in currently serviced areas near Jackson Road. Infill development and mixed uses are planned along this corridor, with reduced setbacks and increased allowances for height. Language is also present throughout the plan encouraging more pedestrian friendly uses in this area, as well as the development of non-motorized connections throughout the Township.

The accommodation of new growth in a manner which focuses pedestrian friendly mixed uses in areas with existing infrastructure and services, while maintaining agricultural and open space in the outlying areas is supported by the County Plan. This also allows more opportunity to provide a diversity of housing and transportation options, sustainable

development patterns and economic development. The Township should expand upon this by specifying how and where mixed use areas will be implemented and prioritized along the corridor.

The Township identifies the maintenance of “current water and sewer district boundaries” in the Community Facilities and Services area. In the following Future Land Use Plan section, the Plan identifies that water and sewer infrastructure systems are available and may be expanded in the future. The Plan could be expanded to show where these boundaries are located, and develop language to provide policy guidance on if and how these boundaries will be used in the coming years.

The Township Plan’s Future Land Use Categories areas are each supported by a description of the appropriate zoning districts, and the implementation section notes the need for reviewing the zoning ordinance and amending where necessary to support the goals of the Township Plan. This is important to implementing the visions set forth by the Township Plan.

Many of the Future Land Use Categories are well thought-out and demonstrate a willingness to consider alternative forms of future land use. One inclusion worth noting is the incorporation of an Agricultural Preservation Overlay. This map is a requirement of being eligible for Purchase of Development Rights programs. While this area is referenced and said to be illustrated in Figure 18 – it is not. The Overlay *is* displayed on Figure 11. This reference should be changed for accuracy and clarity.

Scio Township amended their Master Plan in 2005 to meet the State PDR requirements, however, some subtle changes to the text of the 2008 Scio Township Master Plan Update since the 2005 amendment may not meet one of the State PDR requirements. According to the *Policies and Procedures of the Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund* (State PDR Program) the Scio Township Master Plan Update meets all the following State PDR requirements below, except it may not meet requirement number b)

- a) The areas intended for agricultural preservation are clearly depicted on the future land use map.
- b) A description of how and why the preservation area was selected.
- c) Goals for farmland preservation.
- d) Language indicating why farmland should be preserved in the community (cost of services studies, economic benefit to the community etc.)
- e) Text describing the strategies intended to be used in order to preserve the agricultural land, including Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) but should include other techniques.

On pages 23 and 41 of the Draft Scio Township Master Plan Update, it states the following: “As illustrated in Figure 11, the Agricultural Land Preservation Area Overlay specifically identifies the area of the Township where there is the largest concentration of farmland.” This description may not be sufficient for describing how and why the preservation area was selected (requirement number b) above).

In the 2005 Amendment to the Scio Township Master Plan, the made the following statement:

The Agricultural Lands Preservation Plan Overlay Map more specifically identifies the area of the Township where there is the largest concentration of farmland. The area designated corresponds to and expands upon areas previously characterized in Chapter II of the Master Land Use Plan as the Agricultural Unit, one of six planning units which generalize the character of various areas of the Township.”

Since there is no “Agricultural Unit” identified in the 2008 Scio Township Master Plan Update, there is substantially less explanation of “how and why the agricultural preservation area was selected” and this may not be sufficient to meet the State PDR requirements in the future for local master plans.

One suggestion is to use the language that described the “Agricultural Unit” in the 2005 amended Scio Township Master Plan (originally adopted in 1996), for further describing “how and why the agricultural preservation area was selected,” which states the following:

- This area comprises most of the area actively being farmed as well as land under P.A. 116;
- Soils are generally unsuitable for septic field and building constructions;
- A large wetland area is located at the intersection of Honey Creek and Liberty Road while other wetlands in a linear pattern follow Mill Creek, Honey Creek, and various drains.

In addition to adding this language to the description of “how and why the agricultural preservation area was selected,” the Township could also explain that this is the location of most of the Prime Agricultural Soils in the Township.

These suggested language additions to page 23 and to the second paragraph after the “Agricultural Preservation” heading on page 41 would provide sufficient explanation as to “how and why the Township Agricultural Preservation Overlay Area was selected” and would more likely meet the State PDR requirements.

The “Residential” Future Land Use Category includes commendable specifications for High Density Residential which “encourages and supports innovative housing such as attached and cluster developments that preserve open space and protect natural features. Density is proposed at 4 to 8 dwelling units per acre. However, greater densities may be allowed in cases showing exceptional design and conservation...” This encouragement of mixed uses and other flexibility is echoed by the inclusion of “Special Planning Areas”. This land use is supported by the County Plan Landscapes recommendation 1.4 to “encourage infill development in suburban areas to develop at higher density (4 to 8 dwelling units per acre).

The “Transportation” category is located within the “Other Township Policies” section of the Township Plan. While existing road classifications and future right-of-ways are mentioned briefly, this section includes no future plans or goals for the transportation

network, nor any policies. Further, various parts of the Township Plan include language on the importance of non-motorized opportunities; it is not discussed within the Transportation section. Information and maps in Appendix A begin to address this and should be brought into body of plan in goals or policies section. Specific policies to make residential *and* commercial areas walkable, reduce parking requirements, and provide non-motorized improvements throughout the suburban and rural areas which correspond to the WATS Non-motorized Plan should be included (County Plan Transportation Goals: Chapter 10 Objective 9). Further, it is recommended that the WATS Non-motorized and Transit Plans are included by reference. This is supported by the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) comments attached.

Scio Township has a demonstrated interest in its historic resources, character-defining features and landscapes. However, the draft Scio Township Master Land Use Plan only briefly mentions one historic resource, the Delhi Bridge, designated as a historic district in 2007. Scio Township has also worked with Webster Township to take steps to protect and preserve another Washtenaw County Local Historic District, Gordon Hall. The Washtenaw County historic resources database on the web, known as HistWeb, returned 147 individual historic sites recorded in a Washtenaw County survey of Scio Township. Also to be noted are numerous Centennial Farms throughout the area, which are reminders of many Scio Township families' proud agricultural heritage. Scio Township should consider articulating a goal to seek protection and preservation of historic resources through local, state and national historic designation or easement programs, all of which employ design guidelines and review to insure appropriate treatment of historic properties (County Plan Historic Preservation: Chapter 9 Objective 3). Further information on historic resources in Scio Township is attached.

The Township Plan includes Sub Area Plans which set policies for areas within the Township. For example, new developments are to implement Low Impact Development (LID) or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards in all sub areas excepting the Jackson Road Corridor. These design guidelines should be extended into the Jackson Road corridor as well.

The Huron Sub Area requires open space and trail requirements in subdivisions, and encourages policies for tree preservation. Development Strategies in this area also include developing non-motorized transportation along major roads and assisting the development of the Border to Border Trail.

Other Sub Areas include strategies for encouraging pedestrian amenities, establishing greenway corridors connecting park spaces with residential and recreation areas. The Mill Creek Sub Area sets a strategy to "implement policies to encourage mixed retail and residential use adjacent to Village of Dexter, and encourage infill development..." and to develop a non-motorized network, and encourage public transportation.

The Honey Creek area mentions the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a method to shape the landscape by transferring density to Jackson Rd while preserving agricultural or open space contiguous with neighboring townships. This is consistent with County Plan Agriculture Objective 2: Encourage and Support agricultural operations through farmland preservation programs.

The Jackson Sub Area strategies include, among other things, encouraging pedestrian, non-motorized and public transit, energy efficiency and mixed uses such as office on upper floors and retail on first. This section also discusses the Economic Development Strategic Plan which recommends a business campus at Zeeb or Baker interchange, redevelopment and infill into mixed use, multi-story structures in pedestrian-oriented atmosphere near Zeeb Rd. To accommodate recommendations, Special Planning Areas (SPA) proposed in land use plan with requirements similar to PUD. This plan should be included in the appendix.

Throughout the Township Plan, policies are difficult to identify. For example, an Agricultural Preservation Overlay is included, and one portion of the plan mentions the Township's ability to use sliding scale zoning and Purchase of Development Rights, however no policies to encourage these or other methods are detailed. A separate Open Space Plan is referred to (although not attached) and Bio-reserve Map ranks preservation priorities, but policies to preserve these areas are not discussed. Likewise, specific environmental or transportation policies are not included in the plan to support the language reflecting their importance throughout the plan.

Appendix A includes demographic information, maps and descriptions of natural and historic resources, and community facilities and services data. Figure 19 illustrates existing and potential non-motorized linkages. Some of this information would be better suited within the body of the plan, especially the Trails, Pathways and Greenways Map (Figure 19), which should be in the transportation section with supporting policies. Natural features maps would be appropriate in the policy section with policies which relate to implementing the goals for these areas/resources.

Implementation does mention that zoning needs to be evaluated and amended as necessary to support plan. Other policies specific to goals for each category would also help in the implementation of this plan and its goals.

### **Contiguous Community Land Uses**

- East (Ann Arbor Township): Scio Township's northeastern corner borders Ann Arbor Township. Ann Arbor Township's future land uses for this area include Agricultural Production, which is within the Agricultural Preservation Overlay, and Residential. The corresponding corner of Scio Township is Agriculture within the Agricultural Preservation Overlay and Low Density Residential. These uses align with similar uses in the neighboring Township, and are compatible.
- Southeast (City of Ann Arbor): The City of Ann Arbor's land use along it's western border which is adjacent to Scio Township is predominately single family residential, with commercial uses along Jackson Road. These uses are compatible with those in the Township Plan.
- Southeast corner (Pittsfield Township): The northwest corner of Pittsfield Charter Township is planned for Research & Development. The corresponding southeast corner of Scio Township is high Density Residential. These uses separated by approximately ½ mile of city of Ann Arbor land. Adjacent land uses are compatible.

- South (Lodi Township): Future land use along the Northern section of Lodi Township which borders Scio Township is suburban residential with a density of 4 du-8du/ac in the northeast section, with Rural Residential toward the middle, and Agricultural Use to the far left. These uses closely align with the planned uses and densities in the Scio Township Master Land Use Plan.
- Southwest (Freedom Township): The southeast corner of Dexter Township is planned for Rural Residential land use. This use is compatible with those planned for the northeast corner of Scio Township.
- West (Lima Township): The Future Land Use in the portion of Lima Township that border Scio Township is predominately “Agriculture”, with some “Rural Residential” areas near the Village of Dexter and along the north of Jackson Rd. These uses are compatible with those adjacent in Scio Township.
- Northwest (Village of Dexter): Future Land Uses planned in the Village of Dexter along the border shared with Scio Township include Village Density, Suburban Density and Multiple Family Density residential, Public/Semi-Public and Research/Development. These uses are compatible with Scio’s neighboring Residential, Office/Industrial and Recreation/Conservation areas. One point of discrepancy is an area along Baker Rd just south of Dan Hoey Rd. which the Village designates as Suburban Density and Multi-Family Density Residential, and the Township calls Office/Industrial.
- Northwest corner (Dexter Township): The southeast corner of Dexter Township is planned for Rural Residential. The future land uses mapped by Scio Township for its northwest corner are Open space/Agricultural/Residential and Recreation/Conservation. These uses are compatible.
- North (Webster Township): Predominately Agricultural and Rural Residential Land Uses, with a bit of Urban Residential Planned for the area just south of Joy Rd. This area of higher residential density aligns with the Medium Density Residential area in the Scio Township Future Land Use map. The Agricultural Preservation Overlays are also planned in a way to encourage continuous long term agriculture across township boundaries. Uses along this northern border are compatible.
- Northeast (Northfield Township): The southwest corner of Northfield Township which touches Scio Township is planned for Agriculture. This future land use is consistent with the Open Space/Agriculture/Residential land use designated for in the northeast corner of Scio Township.

### **Contiguous Community Comments**

No comments were received from contiguous communities.

### **Review of Plan in Context of Contiguous Community Master Plans**

Scio Township Master Land Use Plan has a “neighboring communities” section, and Washtenaw County Comp Plan section, promoting regional consideration of land uses.

The Goals of the Scio Township Master Land Use plan are compatible with those of the surrounding community Master Plans.

### **Applicable County Department Comments**

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS): See attached

Washtenaw County Historic Preservation: See attached

Washtenaw County Drain Commission (WCDC): See attached

### **Statement of Consistency**

Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment find the Scio Township Master Land Use Plan update consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County, and those of adjacent communities.

Additional details are in the staff review and comments included in the letter at front of review packet.

DRAFT