



Washtenaw County
Department of Planning & Environment

February 7, 2008

Wilma Luna, Secretary
Pittsfield Township Planning Commission
6201 West Michigan Avenue
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108

RE: Pittsfield Township Proposed Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan

Dear Ms. Luna:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment to the Pittsfield Township Comprehensive Plan. In accordance with the Township Planning Act, Public Act 168 of 1959 as amended, the amendment was reviewed by Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board and the Board of Commissioners. The Washtenaw County 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 amendments.

The Township is seeking review and comment on three amendments to the Pittsfield Township Comprehensive Plan:

1. Reclassification of Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead from "*Suburban Residential, Moderate Density*" to "*Public Facilities and Public and Private Recreation/Open Space*"
2. Reclassification of Existing Roads
3. Adoption of the State Road Corridor Study

Pittsfield Township is taking steps to update its Comprehensive Plan to reflect the current functions of the both the farmstead and the existing roads under amendment 1 and 2. The reclassification of the Sutherland-Wilson Farm is entirely consistent with *Objective 8.1.2 – Park Development* of the Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County (County Plan). The reclassification of the existing roads has no impact on the County Comprehensive plan.

The adoption of the State Road Corridor Study, amendment 3, for State Road from Ellsworth to Bemis Road was done with the support of the Washtenaw County Road Commission, the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority and Pittsfield Township. The Corridor Study includes a recommendation for a significant expansion of State Road between Ellsworth and Bemis.

Based on the staff review of the proposed update in the context of the County Plan, it is determined that the amendments 1 and 2 are consistent with the County Plan. For Amendment 3, the State Road Corridor Study, the recommendation for approval is conditioned upon the Township taking steps to ensure that the adjacent land use is developed to densities and functions that will reflect the increased road capacity, that non-motorized transportation alternatives are incorporated into the design and that the Township take steps to encourage transit to support the “transit oriented centers” recommended by the study.

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 Township as you work to implement the policies included in your plan, please call me at (734) 222-6888.

Sincerely,

Washtenaw County

Patricia Denig
Director of Planning Services
Department of Planning and Environment

Attachments

Staff Report

Staff Review and Statement of Consistency with MAPF (State PDR Program)

Washtenaw County Department of Public Health comments

Washtenaw County Drain Commission comments

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) comments



Staff Report

RE: Comprehensive Plan Amendments Pittsfield Township – Washtenaw County Review

Date: January 16, 2008

Background

Washtenaw County Department of Planning and Environment (P&E) received the draft Comprehensive Plan Amendments for Pittsfield Township on December 26, 2007. 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 the 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 Township is seeking review and comment on three amendments to the Pittsfield Township Comprehensive Plan:

1. Reclassification of Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead from "*Suburban Residential, Moderate Density*" to "*Public Facilities and Public and Private Recreation/Open Space*"
2. Reclassification of Existing Roads
3. Adoption of the State Road Corridor Study

Below is review of each of the amendments.

Reclassification of the Sutherland-Wilson Farmstead:

The reclassification of the Sutherland-Wilson Farm is consistent with *Objective 8.1.2 – Park Development* of the County Plan (p. 8-6). The Objective encourages local

governments "to plan for, acquire and develop neighborhood and local parks to adequately serve existing and future residents." The sesquicentennial farm was acquired by the Township in 2000 for this purpose and the reclassification will reflect its current use.

The farm house is currently listed under the county's register of historic places and was reviewed by the County's Senior Preservation Planner, who also recommends support for the reclassification.

Road Reclassification

The reclassification of the existing roads is being done to reflect its current function and has no impact on the County Comprehensive plan.

Adoption of the State Road Corridor Study

The State Road Corridor Study (Study) recommends a significant expansion of State Road from Ellsworth to Bemis based on existing use and growth projections. Due to the potential implications for such a large expansion, we would recommend the following:

1. *Conform adjacent land uses* - Pittsfield Township should ensure the surrounding land use conforms to the function and the outcomes set forth by the Study and the Pittsfield Township Comprehensive Plan. Conforming the expansion to the surrounding land is consistent with *Objective 10.3.4 – Proper Planning of Expanded Corridors* of the County plan (p. 10-8).
2. *Ensure consistency of Township Planning Documents* – The Zoning Ordinance for Pittsfield Township and the Comprehensive Plan for the parcels adjacent to State Road are inconsistent. While the Zoning Ordinance allows for Planned Unit Developments (PUD) that would allow for greater densities and mixed-use, the Comprehensive Plan future land use map suggests the area should become a Research and Development corridor (Comprehensive Plan Map 4- Future Land Use September 2007).
3. *Encourage residential density and mixed use* – The Study calls for the creation of "transit oriented centers" commonly referred to as Transit Oriented Development along the corridor. TOD, as envisioned by the Study, requires higher residential densities than what currently exist in the adjacent land to be successful.

The Study was initiated to, "*create a corridor transportation plan that would address traffic flow, land use, safety, all modes of travel (pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular, and transit), and other aspects that will influence the character of the corridor.*" (Study p. 7) Currently, State Road is a two lane artery with limited turning lanes. The segment north of Michigan Avenue is classified as an "urban minor arterial" and the portion south is classified as an "urban collector." The

Study was completed by Parsons Brinkerhoff Michigan, LLC & LSL Planning in 2006 and was funded by the Washtenaw County Road Commission, developers, AATA and Pittsfield Township.

The study recommends:

- Four lane boulevard from Ellsworth to Textile;
- Five lane boulevard from Textile to Michigan Avenue; and
- A three lane corridor from Michigan Avenue to Bemis.

The recommendations also encourage non-motorized transportation and the development of “transit-oriented centers.” And, the Study references the County Plan’s desire for “nodes of development” that can be served by transit. To meet this goal the Township should ensure that any PUD for the adjacent parcels incorporates higher densities to a minimum one half mile from nodes along State Road. In addition, the parcels should include necessary infrastructure to support transit services including facilities for bus service along with pedestrian egress. This is consistent with *Objective 10.2.5 Development Density to Support Transit* from the County Plan (p. 10-7).

The adoption of the study raises two main concerns, (1) does the road expansion recommended by the Study discourage sustainable patterns of development and (2) does the current Comprehensive Plan for Pittsfield address the land use implications to the adjacent property that would logically occur as a result of a major road expansion. Further, while suggesting the need to improve transit options, will the road expansion unintentionally diminish the capacity for transit and transit oriented development by supporting the continuation of a low-density pattern of development.

According to the Zoning Ordinance for Pittsfield Township, the parcels adjacent to State Road north of Textile are zoned for Planned Unit Development (PUD). However, the current Comprehensive Plan map lists the parcels future use as *research and development* north of Michigan Avenue and *low density housing* south of Michigan Avenue. Both the Zoning Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan documents should be amended to reflect the need for higher densities that would support TOD opportunities and to achieve the goals of the State Road Corridor Plan.

The Township Zoning Ordinance allows for residential density up to nine units per acre and for mixed use development under the PUD category. Washtenaw County’s Planning and Environment Department is available to assist the Township to ensure that the adjacent parcels are developed in a manner consistent with goals and objectives in the Study and the County Comprehensive Plan.

Contiguous Community Land Uses

Not applicable.

Contiguous Community Comments

None received

Applicable County Department Comments

Washtenaw County Public Health: None Submitted

Washtenaw County Drain Commission (WCDC): None Submitted

Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS): See attached