

Date Received: Nov 9, 2007

N-10-2007

**TOWNSHIP:** Superior

**LOCATION:** The 55 acre site is located along Prospect Road, north of the Vreeland Road intersection, in Section 22 in Superior Township. Superior LLC, the property owner, is 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 Superior LLC Property site totals 55 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 Superior Charter Township Growth Management Plan (Township Plan), the long-range planning for this parcel is Agriculture, Conservation and Rural Residential. *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan) designates this parcel as Open Space and Rural. 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 data, the land use on this parcel is currently active agriculture. The surrounding land use around this parcel includes single-family residential to the north; and active agriculture to the west which is protected through the PA116 program. 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 AG-1, Primary/Essential Agricultural District. The surrounding zoning designation is AG-1 in all directions, and A-2, Secondary Agricultural District nearby to the south of Vreeland Rd.

According to the Superior Charter Township Zoning Ordinance (Township Ordinance), the intent of the Essential Agricultural District is: "...to preserve woodlands and wetlands associated with farms which because of their natural physical features, are useful as water retention, surface water purification and groundwater recharge areas, and as habitat for plant and animal life, and which have important aesthetic and scenic value that contributes to the unique character of the agricultural district;" and to "prevent the conversion of agricultural land to non-farm development" and "to prevent encroachment of urban and suburban services into agricultural areas" and finally to "prevent intrusion into farms areas of uses which are incompatible with general farming activities."

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 Open Space and Rural. Open Space areas, according to *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County*, "can refer to grasslands, stands of trees, swampy lowland, or a park." Rural areas are "recognized for agricultural operations, parklands and vast open spaces." 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 Agricultural Lands, Conservation and Rural Residential. Farmland in this area is "especially valued as the location for permanent open space preservation, if agricultural operations cease." In addition, this parcel is located within the designated Agricultural Preservation Overlay. The Township Plan encourages landowners in this area to participate in conservation programs. Recreational land use is also permitted in this area if done in a manner which does not jeopardize the environmental functions of the land.

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 western portion of this site has woodlands, and wetlands are found at the south and north of the property. However, 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 and County Plans indicate that this area does not have, nor is it projected to have, water or sewer services. The closest area served by public sanitary sewer and water is just south of Geddes Rd., two miles to the south.

The Township is presently patrolled by the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department. Superior Township is served by the Superior Township Fire Department, whose fire station is located on Ford Rd. three miles to the northwest.

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

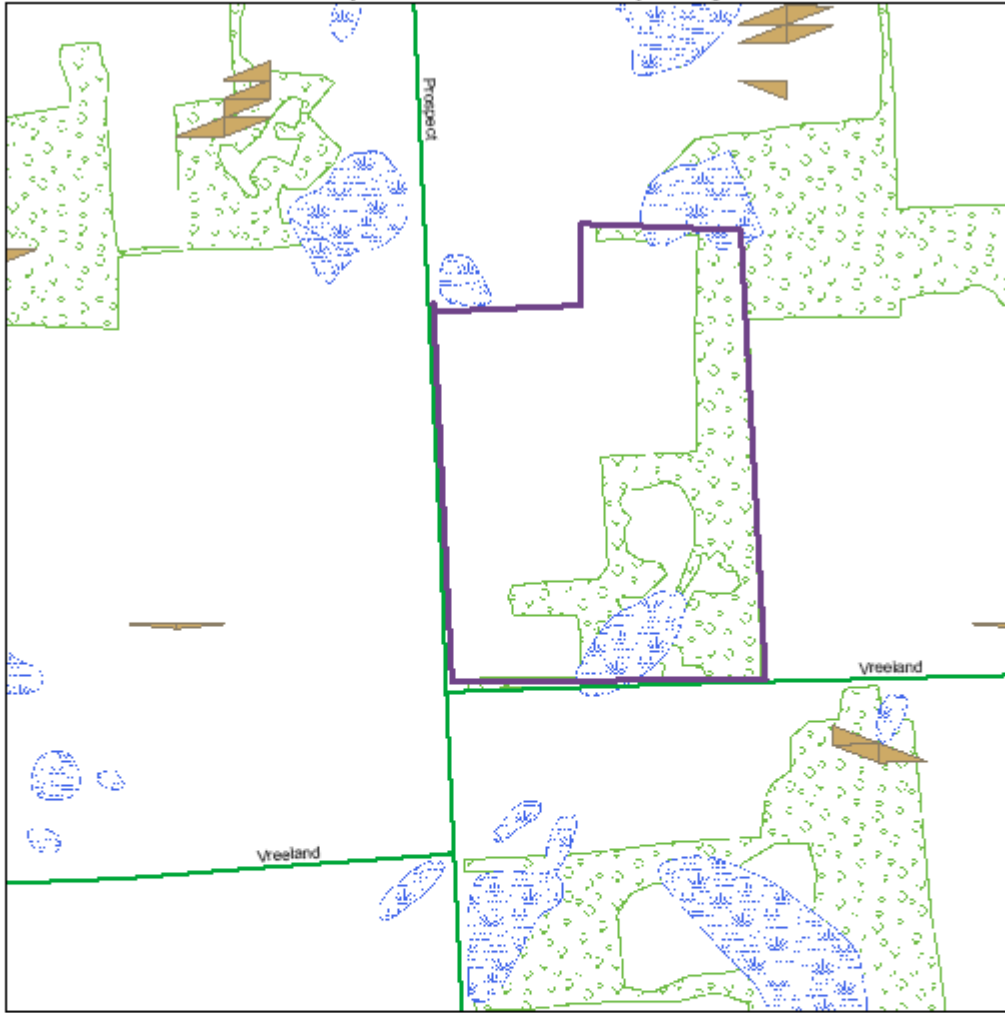
Access to the site would be provided from Prospect Road. The majority of the Township's roads are local gravel roads, however Prospect Rd. is paved. Traffic counts data have indicated substantial increases in average daily traffic counts on Township roads. As growth and development continues in and around Superior 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 the conservation of 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.

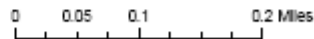
# Superior LLC Property



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Washenaw County Department of Planning and Environment

**SUPERIOR TOWNSHIP -- NATURAL FEATURES**



## Legend

- Roads
- Steep Slope
- Wetlands
- Woodlands

