

Northfield Township Site Plan Review

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| Applicant: | Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation |
| Project: | Whitmore Lake Preserve |
| Address: | Seven Mile Road at Nollar Road |
| Date: | Issued 11/24/2015 Public Hearing 12/16/2015 |
| Request: | Rezoning Site plan approval |
| Recommendation: | Recommend rezoning to Township Board Approve site plan |

PROJECT AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is on the northern edge of the Township, east of Whitmore Lake. The land is currently undeveloped and contains portions of Lawton Lake and two smaller kettle ponds. Wetlands and woodlands comprise the majority of the site; a cleared field at the westernmost portion of the site makes up most of the remainder.

The applicant proposes to permanently retain the land in an undeveloped state as a nature preserve under the stewardship of Washtenaw County. The proposed improvements on the southernmost end of the site provide access to the preserved site via a four-car gravel parking lot with bike racks, entry sign, map and rules kiosk, and landscaping.

Figure 1: Aerial Photo



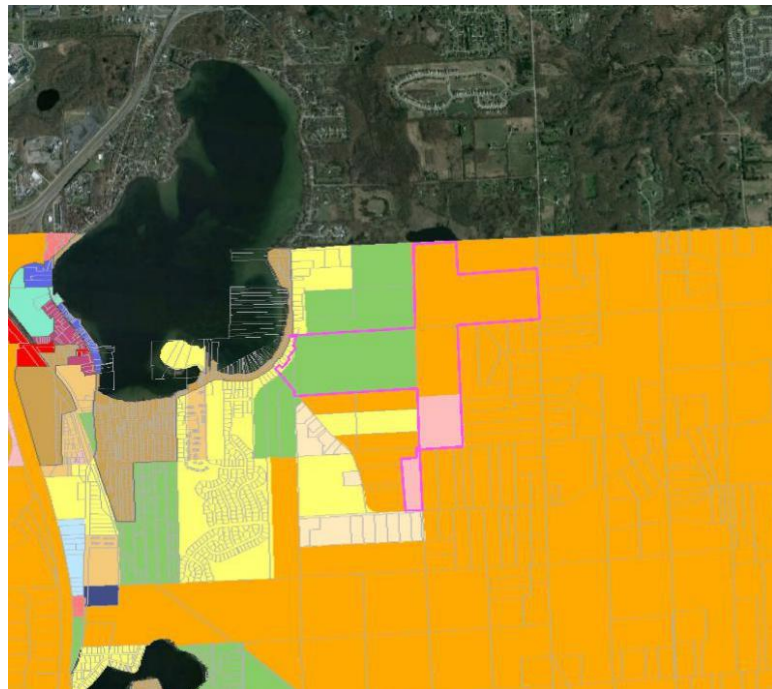
LAND USE AND ZONING

No structures currently exist on the site. The land is currently zoned AR (Agricultural), RC (Recreation Conservation), and LC (local commercial). The applicant proposes to rezone all of the land in the subject site RC (Recreation Conservation). Permitted uses in the Recreation Conservation district include public and private preservation and conservation.

Surrounding Land Uses

| | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>North:</i> | Residential; conservation; Green Oak Township (lake) |
| <i>East:</i> | Residential; agricultural |
| <i>South:</i> | Residential; agricultural |
| <i>West:</i> | Conservation; residential |

Figure 2: Land Use and Zoning



MASTER PLAN

The subject site is in the Lakes Sub-Area (5) as described in the 2012 Northfield Township Master Plan.

Applicable development strategies outlined for this sub-area are:

- Develop non-motorized transportation to connect parks, Township facilities, and adjacent communities through an interconnected system of trails along major roads;
- Establish parks in proximity to higher density population areas to meet the needs of the residents and include passive uses; and
- Coordinate with Washtenaw County for parkland and open space acquisition and development.

Applicable design guidelines for this sub-area are:

- Maintain and develop greenways and wildlife corridors to and from natural areas; and
- Promote low impact development techniques for stormwater management.

The master planned future land use for the western portion of the subject site is Recreation Conservation; the future land use for the eastern portion of the site is Low Density Residential. The southernmost parcel on the site, which is proposed to host the parking and access to the Preserve, is designated Medium Density Residential.

The table below describes the intent, relationship to natural features, and compatible uses of each future land use category.

| | Recreation Conservation | Low Density Residential | Medium Density Residential |
|---|---|---|---|
| <i>Intent</i> | To provide areas for an open space system that preserves and enhances significant natural features and provides recreational opportunities for Township residents | To accommodate housing not intended to be served by sanitary sewer, and to preserve a predominantly rural character including agricultural operations | Residential development with a suburban character at a density of 1-4 units per acre |
| <i>Relationship to natural features</i> | Includes environmentally sensitive features which are to be protected | Significant natural features may exist | Lesser degree of significant natural features; access to collector and internal subdivision roads |
| <i>Desirable uses and elements</i> | Conservation; active and passive recreation | Parks, open space, conservation | Parks, open space, and conservation areas |

Items to be addressed

None

DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

The dimensional requirements of the Recreation Conservation district are described in the chart below.

| | Required | Provided | Compliance |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Lot Area</i> | > 10 acres | 260 acres | Met |
| <i>Lot Width</i> | > 300 feet | 375 feet (frontage on 7 Mile Road) | Met |
| <i>Setback - Front</i> | > 60 feet | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Setback - Side</i> | > 30 feet | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Setback - Rear</i> | > 50 feet | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Lot Coverage</i> | < 10% | 0.0002% | Met |
| <i>Building Height</i> | < 40 feet | N/A | N/A |

Items to be addressed

None

NATURAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES

Approximately 45% of the land (119 acres) is classified as protected wetland by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and 58% (151 acres) is classified as woodland, with considerable overlap. A Green Infrastructure analysis conducted by the Huron River Watershed Council in 2015 identified the area as the Davis Creek Headwaters. These are the features that the project is designed to preserve.



Figure 3: Natural Features



Figure 4: Green Infrastructure

In addition to the contiguous tract of wetland identified by MDNR, 0.148 acres of wetlands were delineated by Mannik & Smith Group on June 28, 2015 along the entire western edge of the proposed

parking lot. The proposed preparation plan shows approximately 600 square feet of wetland (0.01 acre) within the vegetation removal zone, and the site plan shows the southwest corner of the parking lot apparently grazing the limits of the delineated wetland. Due to the proximity of the wetland to an observed stream, Mannik & Smith Group determined that it would be regulated by the State of Michigan and noted that a field review by MDEQ will be necessary in order to finalize the regulatory status of the wetland.

One 27-inch oak tree immediately west of the site's driveway is proposed to be saved, though part of its dripline is shown within the limits of vegetative clearance. Appropriate tree protection and preservation strategies are outlined in the plan. Three trees are shown to be removed from the site, but no detail is provided about them. Three 2"-2.5" caliper swamp white oak are proposed to be planted.

Items to be addressed

- ☐ Secure permits associated with wetland disturbance from MDEQ
- ☐ Identify the size and species of trees to be removed

BUILDING LOCATION AND SITE ARRANGEMENT

No buildings are proposed.

Items to be addressed

None

PARKING AND LOADING

The parking requirements of the Recreation Conservation district are described in the chart below.

| Required | Provided | Compliance |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| > 10 feet from property line or wall, screen, planting strip | 10 feet | Met |
| Shall not be in front yard setback (60 feet) | 60 feet | Met |
| Drained | Sloped to back corner and into treatment pond | More information required |
| Paved (may be waived to gravel) | Gravel | Met |
| Aisles: > 22 feet | 22 feet | Met |
| Spaces: > 200 square feet | 240 feet | Met |

The applicant proposes a parking area which accommodates four vehicles and four bicycles. Section 36-762(3) requires all areas to be paved and striped, but allows for the planning commission to waive this requirement to a gravel surface if all of the following conditions apply:

1. The property is zoned AR, agricultural;
2. The use does not require more than 45 spaces;
3. Dust or scattered gravel will not affect neighboring properties; and
4. The engineer certifies that it will be well-drained and not injurious to neighboring properties.

Criteria 2 and 3 are met. Criteria 4 requires engineering affirmation. Criteria 1 is not met in letter. However, the proposed zoning and associated use are even less intense than the zoning / use at which the less-intense parking treatment is permitted. Further, it is not clear that any parking at all is required, so its provision and the manner thereof are entirely at the discretion of the applicant.

Items to be addressed

- ☐ *Planning Commission waiver requested for gravel parking lot*
- ☐ *Existing drainage patterns and alterations arising from proposed improvements shall be submitted to Engineering*
- ☐ *First flush capture basin shall meet Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's Office standards.*

SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Access to the site is proposed via one driveway. The drive is part of a shared approach that is directly across the street from Nollar Road. The proposed project will pave the entire shared approach with asphalt, and an 18' wide gravel driveway will lead to the parking stalls. A review by the Township engineer notes that this is likely too narrow for two-way traffic. Additional engineering comments include recommending a construction detail of the proposed tire stops and noting that a detailed grading with spot elevations will be required.

Items to be addressed

- ☐ *Increase proposed drive to 20' in order to accommodate two-way traffic.*
- ☐ *Provide construction detail of the proposed tire stops*
- ☐ *Secure permits associated with driveway improvements from the Washtenaw County Road Commission.*

LANDSCAPING

No landscaping is specifically required for a recreational development. Three swamp white oaks of 2.5" caliper are proposed on the site.

Items to be addressed

None

LIGHTING

No lighting is proposed.

Items to be addressed

None

SIGNS

Three signs are shown on the proposed site layout: one road sign to be installed by the Washtenaw County Road Commission, one entry sign placed 15' from the road ROW, and a trailhead sign at the interior end of the parking lot. The road sign is outside the jurisdiction of this review. The trailhead sign is exempt from provisions of the sign ordinance via Section 36-797 (1), which states that "signs of a noncommercial nature and in the public interest, erected by, or on the order of, a public officer in the performance of his public duty, such as directional signs, regulatory signs, and informational signs. The standards which apply to the entry sign are described in the table below.

| Required | Provided | Compliance |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|
| ≥ 15' setback | 15' setback | Met |
| ≥ 15 feet height | 7 feet height | Met |
| ≥ 18 square feet area | 18 square feet | Met |

Items to be addressed

None

FLOOR PLAN AND ELEVATIONS

No buildings are proposed.

Items to be addressed

None

VARIANCES

No variances are required.

Items to be addressed

None

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Planning Commission moves to **recommend** to the Township Board approval of the rezoning request Case #JPC150006, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation, as follows:

| Parcel | Current Zoning | Proposed Zoning |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| B-02-04-100-002 | Agricultural | Recreation Conservation |
| B-02-04-400-003 | Agricultural and Local Commercial | Recreation Conservation |
| B-02-09-200-001 | Local Commercial | Recreation Conservation |

- The Planning Commission moves to **approve** the site plan with the following findings, conditions, and waivers.

Findings:

This application is substantially in compliance with Section 36-867, Criteria of Site Plan Review.

Conditions:

- ☐ Secure permits associated with wetland disturbance from MDEQ
- ☐ Identify the size and species of trees to be removed
- ☐ Existing drainage patterns and alterations arising from proposed improvements shall be submitted to Engineering
- ☐ First flush capture basin shall meet Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's Office standards.
- ☐ Increase proposed drive to 20' in order to accommodate two-way traffic.
- ☐ Provide construction detail of the proposed tire stops
- ☐ Secure permits associated with driveway improvements from the Washtenaw County Road Commission.

Waivers:

- ☐ Planning Commission waiver requested for gravel parking lot