

November 30, 2018

Commissioner Fleming, Chairperson  
Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee  
1200 North Telegraph Road  
Pontiac, MI 48341

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 18-10, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the draft City of Rochester Hills Master Plan Amendment.

Dear Chairperson and Committee Members:

On October 26, 2018, Oakland County received a copy of the draft **City of Rochester Hills Master Plan Amendment (County Code Master Plan No. 18-010)**. It has been noted that the submitted Master Plan is referenced as an "update" and consists of 148 pages (pdf) but due to clarification by the Planning Consultant, Giffels Webster, that assisted the City of Rochester Hills with the Master Plan changes, this document is to be considered an "amendment" to the existing Master Plan. The remainder of this document will reference the submitted Master Plan changes as an "amendment" for the purpose of this review. Under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which took effect September 1, 2008, Oakland County has 42 days to submit comments on the Master Plan amendment.

Under the amendments to the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which took effect September 1, 2008, the City of Rochester Hills is required to send a copy of the draft amendment to Oakland County and neighboring communities for comment prior to adoption. Oakland County, adjacent communities, and other jurisdictional agencies have 42 days to submit comments on the draft amendment. At the October 16, 2018 Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee (CZC) meeting it was decided that this body would **waive their right to review, endorse, or make recommendations** on any Master Plan updates, amendments or township rezoning cases that are submitted before their 2019 schedule is established. Therefore, there will not be a CZC meeting, however, a staff review with staff recommendations will be provided to the community. This information was shared with the City Rochester Hills in the notification letter dated November 1, 2018. Once the comment period has expired, the Planning Commission can hold a public hearing and take final action to adopt the plan. The CZC will be given this review and a summary of the information once the 2019 schedule has been set and meetings have been held.

It is assumed the City of Rochester Hills has sent notification of their Master Plan amendment to the adjacent communities of the City of Rochester, City of Auburn Hills, City of Troy, City of Sterling Heights, Bloomfield Township, Orion Township, Oakland Township, Shelby Township, Washington Township, and Macomb County; and the agencies of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) and possibly others. Oakland County did not send notification to these entities because there will not be a CZC meeting for this review.

#### **Staff Recommendation**

Based on the review of the surrounding communities' Master Plans, the **City of Rochester Hills draft Master Plan Amendment is not inconsistent** with the plan of any adjacent city, village, or township within Oakland County. Oakland County has not prepared a countywide development plan, so there is no countywide plan with which to compare the draft amendment. Following is a detailed analysis and summation of the draft amendment.

## Summary Analysis

The current draft is an amendment to the 2012 Master Plan. Upon review of the submitted material there were amendments made to the Master Plan in 2007. Our office has no record of the amendments that were adopted in 2012 and were only made aware of such changes by the documents that are available on the City of Rochester Hills' website: <https://www.rochesterhills.org/index.aspx?nid=205>. Oakland County's last review for the City of Rochester Hills Master Plan was completed in October of 2006 (County Code Number MP 06-08) which was a full update that was adopted in 2007, replacing their 1999 Master Plan.

The document has been completely changed as the 2007 and 2012 plan was completed by McKenna Associates. The current version has been facilitated under the direction of the City's planning consultant, Giffels Webster. Some of these changes include a simplified table of contents and a restructuring of the document. Maps, tables and charts have been called out separately after the first page of the summarized document content. The current draft Master Plan provides updates to population, housing and other economic data. The Plan also includes some changes to the Implementation Policy content and structure.

The draft Master Plan has been amended to break down the plan into themes that are expanded upon in the "Executive Summary". These themes are to "Preserve, Enhance, Diversify" and are to be used as guidance and/or influence the overall plan.

The desire to preserve the City of Rochester Hills' natural resources is significant in many portions of the document and portions are dedicated to describing the environmental features incorporating information from the City's existing resources. The staff applauds the City of Rochester Hills and their continued efforts to protect their natural resources through planning and is suggesting the use of some additional partnerships that maybe helpful. Please reference the recommendations that are included on page 6 of this review.

## Future Land Use Map

The visual representation of the Rochester Hill's policies and objectives are shown on the Future Land Use (FLU) map. The plan has changed in multiple areas. These changes are as follows:

- A "Residential 5" category was added which promotes an increase of density and more compact residential developments.
- The classification of "One Family Cluster" has been discontinued in this latest version of the FLU map. There was a very few, select number of properties that were designated as such in the 2007-2012 versions of the FLU map. All properties that had this designation were reclassified into other Residential classifications (2 thru 5) that were most relevant to the property and existing, adjacent FLU designations.
- A reclassification of the "flexible uses" separating "Residential Office Flex" from "Commercial Residential Flex 2 and 3" providing a more distinctive and less intensive use for what was "Flex 1" as compared to "Flex 2 and 3" in this version as well as the 2007-2012 versions of the FLU map.
- The "Mixed Residential Overlay" has remained a future land use on the map and in the plan but has drastically diminished as compared to the number of properties that were originally included under the overlay. This is appropriate for some of the properties have been able to make the transition into a "flex" designation (Crooks and South Blvd. area / Auburn and Livernois area). Others have remained as only the original underlying classification (Hamlin and Livernois area/ Avon and John R. area) as compared to the 2007-2012 FLU map. This falls into the goals to "Preserve, Enhance, and Diversify" the community through the efforts of this Master Plan.
- Areas designated as "Office" have not changed with exception of the properties between M-59 and South Boulevard along Rochester Road. These properties have been designated to be in the "Flex 2 or 3" future land use, which adds intensity from office to commercial but also promotes the use of residential components.

- The “Regional Employment Area” has been carried over from the 2007 – 2012 FLU maps but is now designated as a boundary and not as a classification. A “Workplace” designation was created to take on most of the properties that were shown to have a classification as a “Regional Employment Area” in addition to other new classifications of “Technology and Office Image Corridor”, “Interchange”, and “Regional Commercial”. Additionally, some properties bordering Hamlin Road, Auburn Road and M-59 (along and west of Crooks Road) saw significant changes allowing “Commercial Residential Flex -3”
- The future land use associated with “Landfill” property and the “Landfill Planning Area” have been removed from the FLU plan. Landfill areas (present and future) have been mostly designated as “Industrial” however, the area that was previously shown as a “Landfill” classification has been restricted in size. The use of a landfill is seen as a “threat”, but the possibility of an “opportunity” is pointed out in the plan. The changes are mostly to the classification of “Public Recreations / Open Space” and in some cases, “Residential 5” type designations have been applied to these areas once designated for landfill operations. Note: there are other areas that were landfills at one time within the City and these areas, as well as the area described above, have been focused on for specific development planning within the future “Redevelopment Sites” area of the Master Plan.
- Water designations (lakes, ponds, reservoirs) from a palette perspective are no longer represented in the legend (or key), which can be confusing in some areas as the color is very similar to the “Workplace” classification, visually. However, the Paint Creek and Clinton River have been noted.
- “Future Roads” have been noted on the plan showing areas of possible connections for complete streets or traffic congestion relief.

Other classification remained very similar or unchanged as compared to the 2007-2012 FLU plan. We have a few recommendations on the FLU plan and map. Please see page 6 of this review for information regarding such suggestions.

### **Coordination with Surrounding Community Boundaries**

As part of our services to County communities, Planning staff prepares and annually updates a Composite Master Plan for the entirety of the County. The Oakland County Composite Master Plan represents generalized future land use based on each community's Master Plan and is available on the [Composite Master Plans page](#) of the County's website (see Figure 1 and 2). Composite Master Plans for are available for each County community. The current Composite Master Plan for Rochester Hills can be found on page 5 of this review and will be used to analyze and review boundary coordination between the City of Rochester Hills and the surrounding communities. For the purpose of this amendment review process, only adjacent communities within Oakland County have been analyzed in correlation with the City of Rochester Hills submitted plan.

Under state law, the County's review is required to include a statement indicating whether the proposed plan is “inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township” that received notice of the draft plan. Any inconsistencies will be addressed for each individual boundary community in the text below.

#### **North Boundary – Oakland Township**

Oakland Township's Master Plan was adopted in September of 2017. Rochester Hills shares their northern boundary with Oakland Township and has comparable zoning and future land uses along this border. All future land uses in this area are of lower impact residential classifications. Much of the area is expected to maintain “Residential 3”, “Residential 2”, “Estate Residential” with very small areas of “Residential 2.5” and “Private Recreation/Open Space” uses. These compare well with Oakland Township's “Single Family” Residential ranging from low to medium-high density (minimum .5 acres for their highest density) with much of the southeast area being “Single Family: Conservation” and “Recreation Conservation” future land uses. Both communities recognize the need to protect natural features and preserve the rural sense of place by putting the least intensive residential in such areas while focusing development in areas with existing infrastructure. **This is a compatible border.**

### South Boundary – City of Troy

The City of Troy's Master Plan was adopted in 2017. All future land uses along the northern border of Troy are planned to be "Single Family Residential" and "Recreation and Open Space" with emphasis on major intersections that are designated as "Neighborhood Nodes" along South Boulevard. The northeast corner of the City of Troy has a future land use designation of "Public and Quasi-Public" space. All these uses, as compared across the border line work well together. **This is a compatible border.**

### West Boundary – City of Auburn Hills

The City of Auburn Hills amended their Master Plan in 2018 which was last updated in 2009. Auburn Hills maintains medium density residential in the northeast, part of Oakland University, and denser residential in the southeast of their plan. Non-residential development along the M-59 corridor and the Auburn Road corridor matches well with the Rochester Hills plan. **This is a compatible border.**

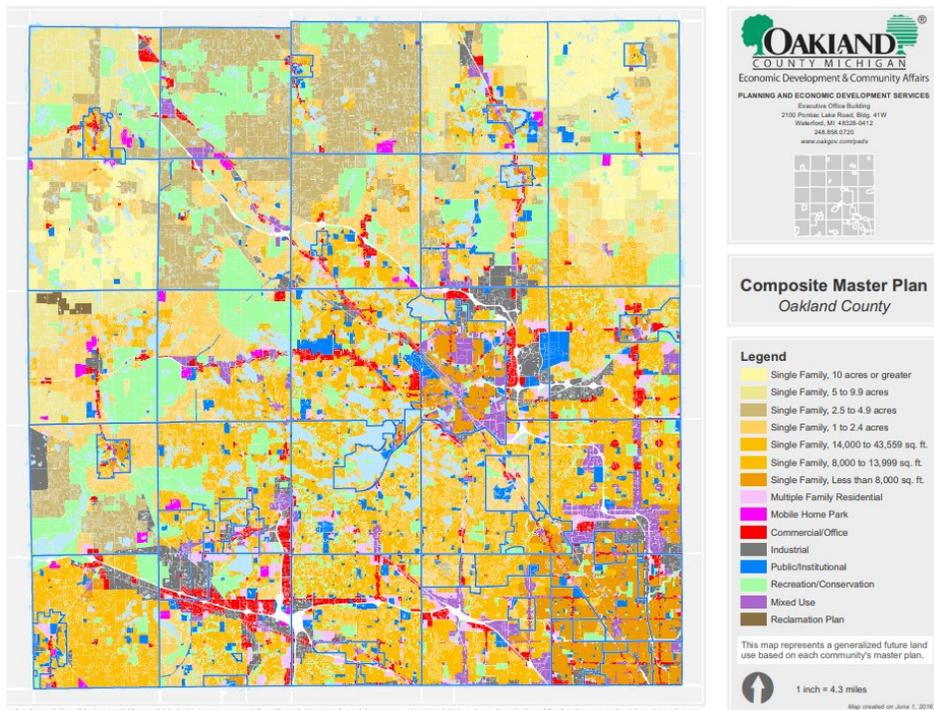
### East Boundary - City of Rochester

The City of Rochester is surrounded by the City of Rochester Hills from the north, south and west. The city updated and adopted their Master Plan in 2014. Most of the future land uses at the border is "Single Family" residential, "Recreation & Open Space", and "Public & Quasi Public" spaces. There is some "Mixed Residential" in the western portion of the city which abuts recreational and commercial "Flex 3" areas. More intense "Mixed Use 2", "Office Technology Research", and "Light Manufacturing" as shown in the southern portion of the City of Rochester along the Rochester Road corridor and beyond, along the City's Southern border. The industrial in this area, while against recreational and residential in Rochester Hills, is conceived as a reactionary classification of the existing uses that transitioned to such in the 1950s and 1960s. The buffer of "Private Recreational/Open Space" that the City of Rochester Hills has shown in their FLU is projected to remain acting as a buffer helping with the use transition of this area between two municipalities. **These are compatible borders.**

### Corner Communities

It is assumed that the City of Rochester Hills has sent the draft Master Plan to the "corner" communities of the City of Sterling Heights, Bloomfield Township, Orion Township and Washington Township. These communities do not share a border with Rochester Hills but do meet at the corners. There is no indication that any of the changes to the City of Rochester Hills draft Master Plan has created inconsistencies with any of these communities' plans.

The Future Land Uses are well described and changes between the latest Master Plan and draft have been documented within the Future Land Use section of the Master Plan.



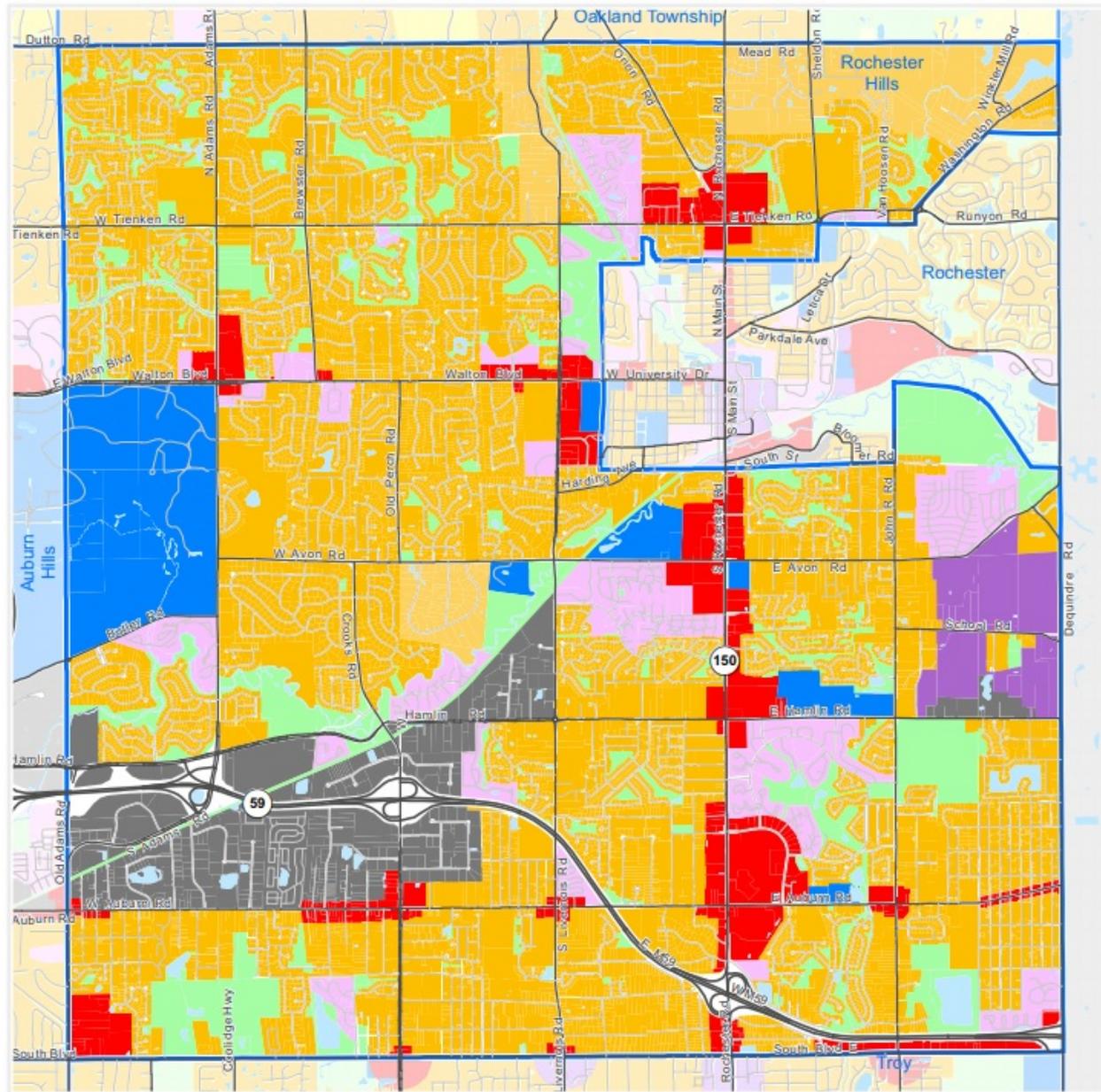
**Figure 1.** The Oakland County Composite Master Plan illustrates a generalization of all 62 communities' Future Land Use plans. The plan can be found as a PDF at the following link:

<https://www.oakgov.com/advantageoakland/resources/Documents/Maps/compmasteroak.pdf>

The City of Rochester Hills Composite Master Plan can be found at:

<https://www.oakgov.com/advantageoakland/resources/Documents/Maps/compmaster70.pdf>

There is additional statics provided (not shown here) on the back of the map. See page 5 for Figure 2.



**Composite Master Plan**  
*City of Rochester Hills*

**Legend**

- Single Family, 10 acres or greater
- Single Family, 5 to 9.9 acres
- Single Family, 2.5 to 4.9 acres
- Single Family, 1 to 2.4 acres
- Single Family, 14,000 to 43,559 sq. ft.
- Single Family, 8,000 to 13,999 sq. ft.
- Single Family, Less than 8,000 sq. ft.
- Multiple Family Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Commercial/Office
- Industrial
- Public/Institutional
- Recreation/Conservation
- Mixed Use
- Reclamation Plan

This map represents a generalized future land use based on each community's master plan.

1 inch = 4,692 feet

Map created on June 1, 2016

**Figure 2.** Composite Master Plan for the City of Rochester Hills: This plan will be updated, as necessary, following the adoption of the proposed amendments to the plan and will reflect a generalization of the proposed Future Land Use map within the adopted Master Plan.

## Recommendations

The following are staff recommendations for the draft Master Plan:

1. Future Zoning classifications should be considered for the Clinton River Trail and the Paint Creek Trails. Such future zoning and planning for the regulating of these non-motorized trails will allow for the property owners to improve and maintain the recreation corridor within the appropriate confines of the City's ordinance and appropriate zoning, especially if a rezoning is required. Current designations for the trails are shown as unclassified or have been classified the same as adjacent properties.
2. Enlarging of the maps within the document to 11x17 fold outs as in the previous versions of the Master Plan. The City of Rochester Hills covers a land area comparable in size to a typical township and with many classifications and designations being represented by distinct colors and hatch types, certain areas are visually difficult to comprehend. These differences are difficult to view at the current scales.
3. Increase the scale of the proposed Future Land Use map as the to maximize the 11x17 sheet as presented in the "Executive Summary". Small areas of different classifications and outlined districts are difficult to distinguish on the map at the current scale. Previous versions of this map were shown at a larger scale which helped with the clarity and designations of multiple land uses and districts in smaller areas. Maps of sub-areas such as the "Regional Employment Area" and "Auburn Road Corridor" or other areas with many FLU designations may help clarify the FLU classification within a certain area of the map.
4. Increase color palette or note large bodies of water such as lakes, ponds, and reservoirs. The color showing large bodies of water and the "Workplace" future land use classification appear to be the same to the point where certain features do not show up as compared to older maps, but it is apparent the map still shows such natural features.
5. Elaborate on design standards within the plan specifically for the three specific redevelopment areas. A vision for these areas has been researched and has been included in the plan. However, to preserve the concept the City would like to see at such locations in the future, the adoption of specific architectural design standards or a form-based code, as a possible overlay would be recommended as a way to regulate the look and feel of these spaces. Understandably, deed restrictions and consent judgments may hinder such regulations but the implementation of such could be investigated in order to preserve the vision that is within the plan for these areas.
6. In 2004, Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) prepared a report for Oakland County which identified and ranked Potential Conservation Areas, following the methodology of the S&H Project. Based on this information, Oakland County developed a Green Infrastructure Vision which highlights the network of connected open space and provides a framework for conservation work. In 2017, MNFI prepared an update to the county-wide Potential Conservation/Natural Areas Report. Recommend incorporating this information into the current plan or a subsequent amendment.
7. Coordination with the Clinton River Watershed Council, Six Rivers Land Conservancy, and Friends of the Rouge pertaining to the Clinton River Main Branch subwatershed, the Stony Creek subwatershed, the Paint Creek subwatershed, the Red Run subwatershed, and the Rouge River Main Branch subwatershed are respectable resources concerning best practices for development and preservation of these watersheds. The City's subwatershed map in coloration with the information from the listed stakeholder resources (above) combined with the existing wetland information provided in the plan is a recommended addition to the document.
8. Include in the Goals and Objectives chapter an objective(s) to protect the City's established historic districts. This objective would appropriately fit in the Land Use, Community Amenities or Preservation and Sustainability sections. The Stony Creek Village Historic District is a Nationally Registered Historic District, and both the Stony Creek Village and Winkler Mill Pond districts are designated locally and are significant to the history of the City of Rochester Hills and the greater Rochester area. Additionally, a map showing the contiguous and non-contiguous locally designated historic districts should be included.

## Plan Contents

The Plan consists of the following generalized sections: Executive Summary, Introduction, Existing Conditions, Visioning and Public Input, Goals and Objectives, Future Land Use, Housing, Redevelopment Sites, Implementation, a Conclusion, and an Appendix. Charts, tables and maps are called out separately in an expansion of the "Plan Contents" following the list of subject sections.

The overall plan reads very well, with a minor exception to the maps (see recommendations 2 and 3 on page 6). Text is comprehensible and broken down into relatable categories. The "Guiding and Influencing Themes", consisting of *Preserve*, *Enhance*, and *Diversify* are well thought out and are projected throughout the document.

Public engagement tools such as the use of visioning sessions, open houses, online surveys and crowdsourcing appeared successful. Information gathered from those tools and sessions are apparent and reflected throughout the document. Further outreach was made with the engaging of a youth council through a visioning session and a survey of 4<sup>th</sup> graders at Rochester Hills elementary schools. The public participation is viewed as an effective way to show the transparency of the process and the creation or amendments of the Master Plan while reporting on the information that was gathered and how it has been added to the Master Plan. The Master Plan contains a very extensive Appendix including all information obtained from the public participation.

Goals and objectives were updated and made clearer by breaking them into categories. One of the topic areas is "Housing" which becomes more a continuing topic of focus throughout the plan. The addition of a residential district to the Future Land Uses allowed for more flexibility in density and the mixing of uses. This change also goes along with the goals and objectives of the *Land Use Planning* category. Other categories such as *Economic Development*, *Transportation*, *Community Amenities and Services*, and *Preservation and Sustainability* have well defined goals and objectives which plays into the "Guiding and Influencing Themes" and implementation plan making for a very well completed document.

Redevelopment areas and strategies are discussed in detail for three sites. A brief summary is included as follows:

1. The first site was the Suburban softball fields and before that the property was used as a landfill that is between Hamlin Road and M-59, just east of Adams Road. The property is part of a 2004 Consent Judgment and is designated as part of the "Technology and Office Image Corridor" within the "Regional Employment Center" in the Future Land Use plan.
2. The second site was used as a landfill area consisting of two large areas that are between Avon Road and Hamlin Road located on the west side of Dequindre Road (the city/county border). Much of the area that has been re-designated with a less intense classification of the Future Land Use plan has been projected to be of a recreational use with some areas of residential.
3. The third redevelopment area is currently home to Bordine Nursery at the northeast corner of Rochester Road and Hamlin Road. The site at a community supported development plan in the early 2000's but following this Master Plan amendment process through public input a more flexible concept is more favorable. The "Commercial Residential Flex – 3" is the classification of the property allowing for mixed uses and including residential which was not part of the original plan.

A generous amount of time and thought was put into these development areas with respect to the future land uses and coloration with adjacent properties as well as the goals of the Master Plan in its entirety. Valuable information was used from public participation process to guide such designs and forethought of the future of these sites.

The implementation and conclusion of the document is user friendly and easy to navigate. The implementation summary has been kept as a table but has added "potential funding sources" and divided responsibility into the "Lead Body" and "Supporting Partners". The "time frame" column has not been completed in this version for any of the action strategy items. The conclusion tells of trends and innovations which are considered best practices to re-review at the 5-year review of the Master Plan.

## **Oakland County Technical Assistance**

A summary of programs offered by the EDCA's Planning Division that are relevant to the City of Rochester Hills Master Plan have been included on the following page (page 9).

## **Conclusion Summary**

The City of Rochester Hills Draft Master Plan Amendment has good strategies led by the information from the public input process which seemed beneficial to the plan. The outcome of the process with the creation of the goals, strategies and the overall plan implementation seems on point. We were pleased to see that Natural Wetlands Inventory Classification and minimal land use intensity increases along the City's borders.

While our review has suggested a couple items that we hope will strengthen the overall plan and help to implement, at no point are our recommendations required. Oakland County does not have a Planning Commission or County Master Plan to do a full comparison and contrast of the information. Our staff review of the proposed Master Plan and a cursory review of those 6 adjacent and corner communities' Master Plans have found the City of Rochester Hills Draft Master Plan Amendment to be not inconsistent.

If there are any questions or comments about this review and analysis, please do hesitate to contact me at (248)858-0389 or email me at [krees@oakgov.com](mailto:krees@oakgov.com). There will be no motion on this review by the CZC therefore a copy of this review will be made to the City of Rochester Hills immediately.

Respectfully,



Scott E. Kree  
Associate Planner

## **CC:**

Ms. Tina Barton, Clerk  
Deborah Brnabic, Planning Commission Chair  
Sarah Roediger, Economic Development Director  
Commissioner Doug Tietz  
Commissioner Adam Kochenderfer  
Commissioner Shelley Goodman Taub, CZC member  
Commissioner Dave Woodward, CZC member

## Oakland County Planning Resources

The Oakland County Department of Economic Development & Community Affairs (EDCA) offers a variety of programs to support Oakland County communities with innovative programming and assistance to create attractive destinations in which to live, work, and raise a family. The chart below details those programs offered by the Planning Division (a division of the EDCA). Current participation in Planning Division programs and opportunities for future involvement are noted on the right of the chart. Additional information on all EDCA programs can be found at [www.oakgov.com/advantageoakland](http://www.oakgov.com/advantageoakland).

Program	Mission	Rochester Hills Opportunities and Current Participation
Environmental Stewardship	Provide information, plans and options to promote conservation of the natural environment while supporting sustainable economic growth, development and redevelopment.	Rochester Hills supports development that is cognizant of natural resource protection and management. County staff members are able to act in a supporting capacity with grant application identification, open space protection, and sustainable development practices.
Historic Preservation Assistance	Support local efforts to maintain and enhance architectural and heritage resources through sustainable practices to enrich the quality of life for all.	County staff is able to assist with potential design concepts for adaptive reuse of any historic structures within the community.
Land Use & Zoning Services	Prepare and provide land use, zoning and master plan reviews for communities to enhance coordination of land use decision-making.	Rochester Hills submits Master Plan updates and amendments for County review and boundary coordination as they are prepared, however, the County has no record of the 2012 Master Plan amendment. Please use the county-wide land use maps and statistics that are available as needed.
Main Street Oakland County (MSOC)	Help local governments develop their downtowns as vibrant, successful districts that serve as the heart of their community.	Rochester Hills is not presently an MSOC member.
One Stop Ready (OSR)	Encourage communities to capitalize on their strengths and refine their economic development processes to implement their community vision.	In the past Rochester Hills was not been part of the OSR Program. We encourage the City of Rochester Hills' staff, as well as elected and appointed officials, to attend our OSR Academy Sessions.
Trail, Water & Land Alliance (TWLA)	Become an informed, coordinated, collaborative body that supports initiatives related to the County's Green Infrastructure Network	The Master Plan notes the importance of non-motorized connections and includes strategies that could be used to successfully implement those recommendations. Participation in TWLA connects cities with like-minded communities and non-motorized planners. The County fully supports the expansion of non-motorized facilities and can aid the community in non-motorized planning efforts through education and the identification of potential funding sources.