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Detroit News
Letter to the Editor

The proposed clean-up and redevelopment of the Suburban Softball site in Rochester Hills ("Landfill Cleanup Opposed," 5/9/04) illustrates the concept that environmental protection and economic development can go hand in hand. The City of Rochester Hills has a unique opportunity to clean up a potentially hazardous landfill, provide economic growth in an appropriate location in the community, and integrate the built and natural environments to provide economic, recreational, and ecological benefits.

The landfill was constructed before the advent of protective liners and caps. Tests indicate that it is leaching contaminants into the soil and groundwater – water that moves in the direction of the Clinton River, which supports a trout fishery and provides valuable recreation opportunities for area residents. In addition, the landfill's cap has been compromised and lacks adequate methane venting. Given these threats, simply leaving the landfill alone is not a viable option. Unfortunately, remediation of such sites is usually cost-prohibitive, but the proposal presented by Real Estate Interest Group (REI) would secure the necessary funds to clean up the site.

Intensive development is necessary in order to recoup the enormous clean-up costs, and the location is ideal for such use. Rochester Hills is a largely residential community that is facing increasing infrastructure costs to support a growing population. The Suburban Softball site is a rational development opportunity that would bring in much-needed income for the city. It is located adjacent to a major freeway and the future Adams Road interchange in an area master-planned for commercial and retail development.

REI has agreed to provide improvements to the Clinton River Trail and a link between the trail and the undeveloped city park north of Hamlin Road. The detention ponds proposed for the park would demonstrate the latest innovations in stormwater management. Far from being an eyesore, the ponds would recreate wetland-type habitat, providing both improved stormwater treatment and aesthetic benefits.

If the City and the developer follow through with the development as proposed, we believe this project will benefit both the community and the Clinton River watershed.

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