



Save Open Space in Rochester Hills

save it now ... or lose it forever.

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Board Members: David Bassett, Pamela Bratton Wallace, Jerry Carvey, Greg Doyle, Donna Folland, Lois Golden, Dan Kiefer, Andy Krupp, Paul Miller, Jessica Opfer, Heather Van Den Berg.

May 25, 2004

Council Members & Mayor Somerville

Back in 1998 the City embarked on the development of a Strategic Plan for Rochester Hills. A consultant, American Communities Partnership, was hired to facilitate the process. Thirty plus community members were requested to help form the plan and contributed many volunteer hours of time and the City provided many hours of staff time to ensure the process was completed. For over nine months this group worked hard to arrive at a consensus plan for the City.

The vision was completed in late 1999 with a number of goals being outlined. Under the leadership of Dr. Gary Russi, President of Oakland University, three implementation committees were formed to begin the process of meeting these goals.

I agreed to chair the Land Preservation Task Force. See the attached Table 3 from the Strategic Plan for land preservation which my committee used as a guide for our work. This committee has worked very hard the past three years, with a lot of help from the Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Department, and developed "The Clinton River in Rochester and Rochester Hills: A Greenway Opportunity Plan." A presentation and copies of this report were given to both Rochester Hills and Rochester City Councils and their Planning Commissions.

There are many cost effective approaches to preserving open space. Work is presently underway to secure conservation easements along the corridor. We are also working with homeowners and subdivisions on improving habitat and appearance through good stewardship of subdivision open spaces and property bordering the rivers running through our community. However, to save the community's few remaining larger green spaces, it has become clear funding needs to be secured to purchase these properties.

Grants for green space are available and we should seek them, but they almost universally require matching funds. A limited millage could provide these needed funds and leverage the grant sources.

The City, and its residents have shown their commitment to funding open space in the past. Back in 1988 the community was given the opportunity to bond for the purchase of park lands. The issue passed with flying colors and we now enjoy some very beautiful park lands and open spaces. We believe it is time to add to the green space while there is still some remaining within the community.

As you know our Committee has initiated a petition drive to place a limited millage of ½ mil for 10 years on this fall's general election. See the attached flyer from Save Open Space Rochester Hills. I am appearing before you to request the Council to consider joining in this community wide effort to save green space, by having the Council place on the ballot the proposal to provide funding for green space preservation. The language from our petition is included as an attachment to this letter.

Should the Council agree to support this proposition, and I hope that you will, I would request you also consider the following:

1. We would welcome one or more of you from the Council to join our Steering Committee. The job of this group would be to provide information to the community so the residents can make an informed decision.
2. We would ask the Mayor to allow staff personnel, particularly from the Parks Department, to provide technical assistance to the committee.
3. The Council would set up an "Open Space Advisory Board." The purpose of the Board would be to research and recommend to Council properties to be purchased with the funds derived from the limited millage proposal. This might be a community based board with 7 members serving 3 year terms. The terms might be staggered with 2 members serving 1 year, 2 members serving 2 years and 3 members serving 3 years. The Mayor would present candidates for Council's confirmation. This Board would work closely with the Parks Department and, of course, the Council.

There will always be competing demands and limited resources for things needed or requested by our residents. I truly believe that seeking a limit millage in the range of ½ mil would not seriously affect other requests for necessary funding for community services. This will provide a much needed tool for the City's leaders and residents to help prevent the rancorous neighborhood conflicts that are occurring at the "nimby" level by proactively securing highly desirable parcels of land that are best left open and green for the entire community to enjoy.

So I respectfully request the Council to join with our residents to protect the things that make our community so special by placing a limited millage on the ballot for this fall's general election.

Sincerely,


Gerald G. Carvey, Chairperson Rochester Hills Land Preservation Task Force