
CITY OF ROCHESTER HILLS

Planning and
Development

DATE: July 14, 2008

TO: City Council

FROM: Dan Casey, Planning &
Development Department

RE: Adoption of Engineering Design
Standards

At the May 5, 2008 City Council discussion of the proposed changes to the Engineering Design Standards, a recommendation was made that the Mayor's Business Council be offered an opportunity to provide input. The discussion concerned two specific standards: the proposed change from a 10-year storm event to a 25-year storm event, and the proposed changes to how fire flow rates are applied.

In 2007, the Mayor's Business Council established a subcommittee that is charged with working with the City Administration to eliminate red tape through the permitting process and making recommendations on development standards. The Permit and Process Subcommittee consists of: three developers who are stakeholders in Rochester Hills; two architects,; one engineer; one property manager/real estate broker; and a facilities director at a local hospital . City staff from all reviewing agencies participates with the Subcommittee at every meeting, resulting in a collaborative effort to streamline government.

The Subcommittee and City staff met on July 9, 2008 to consider the areas of concern to City Council regarding the proposed Engineering Design Standards. Members of the Engineering Services Department led the discussion, describing the proposed changes for which the Subcommittee has been asked to comment upon. This memorandum will serve to represent the Subcommittee's views on these issues.

The Subcommittee was very appreciative of the opportunity to provide feedback. It expressed general support of the proposed changes. Specifically, it feels that it is necessary for the City to implement more current design standards that are respectful of the environment, while not placing undue burden on property owners and the development community. Further, the Subcommittee felt that the Engineering Services Department has acted in a thoughtful, flexible and proactive manner in addressing changing standards that affect storm water quality and quantity.

The Subcommittee's general concerns are:

1. Will the proposed changes increase development costs and be a disincentive to redevelopment
2. Will the standards be specific
3. Is flexibility built into the standards

4. How will the standards affect partial or full redevelopment of structures, particularly those that do not currently store or treat storm water due to a lack of standards at the time of their construction
5. Are the standards in keeping with those of surrounding communities
6. If the new standards are not adopted by August 1, will the City, property owners and developers be subject to different Federal and State standards outside of the City's control.

The Subcommittee's view on the proposed change from a 10-year storm event to a 25-year storm event is as follows:

1. The Subcommittee fully supports the proposed changes to the Standard as they relate to "quality control and treatment of storm water."
2. Flexibility in applying the standards is critical in resolving site concerns, particularly as it relates to redevelopment projects. The Subcommittee requests that the Engineering Department be given the latitude in the standards, wherever possible, to find alternative solutions that meet the intent. The Subcommittee was assured that the text changes do provide the Engineering Department with the flexibility to apply the standards in a manner that will not be unduly cost prohibitive or restrictive. These alternatives would include, as an example, "Green" buildings, bio-swales, and other means that result in higher storm water runoff quality
3. The Subcommittee is generally supportive of the change from a 10-year storm event to a 25-year storm event, acknowledging that it will increase the size of detention basins or create the need for underground structures and ultimately cost more. It was suggested by one member that this change be withdrawn from the document for the time being to allow more study of its potential impact to existing facilities that may be in need of redevelopment.
4. Not adopting the new design standards may be detrimental if the City does not comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II rules. These rules, however, relate to quality issues, not quantity of stored storm water.
5. The impact of a larger detention basin or underground piping creates additional costs and may hamper the ability of a landowner to redevelop all or a portion of a site, particularly if the current development does not have a storm water detention or retention system. Consideration of flexibility within the Zoning Ordinance to allow for modifications to setbacks, landscape buffers, or parking standards that will provide for land area to install storm water control systems is strongly encouraged.

The Subcommittee is supportive of the changes to *Chapter 2 Water Distribution* that relate to fire hydrant spacing and fire flow rates.

Finally, the Subcommittee, appreciative of this opportunity, offered their time to provide feedback on future matters of development standards with a request that they be brought into the process sooner rather than later.