



City of Rochester Hills
AGENDA SUMMARY
NON-FINANCIAL ITEMS

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Legislative File No: 2024-0042 V2

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Chris McLeod, Planning Manager, ext. 2572

DATE: March 18, 2024

SUBJECT: Acceptance of the 2024 Natural Features Inventory Update, which includes the Wetland Inventory Map as required by Section 126-496 of the City's Code of Ordinances

REQUEST:

Acceptance of the 2024 Natural Features Inventory Update, which includes the Wetland Inventory Map as required by Section 126-496 of the City's Code of Ordinances.

BACKGROUND:

Rochester Hills has long valued the vast number and quality of natural features found within the City. In 2005, the City conducted its first, and last, comprehensive Natural Features Inventory. With the amount of change the City has experienced since that time, the advancements in mapping technology, and to allow the City to be able to more prudently weigh future planning options for development and the conservation of natural resources, the City requested that ASTI Environmental (ASTI) complete an update to the City's Natural Features Inventory (NFI), which includes the Wetland Inventory Map. The inventories were conducted throughout 2022 and have undergone a review since that time prior to being brought before City Council. The inventory was completed by reviewing and analyzing data from a number of sources including the City's GIS Department, Oakland County Conservation Department, Oakland County Water Resources Commission, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, amongst numerous others. ASTI also performed a number of onsite inspections throughout the City to help verify information ascertained from mapping resources.

The Wetland Inventory Map was developed as a part of an overall update to the City's Natural Features Inventory. The overall 2024 Natural Features Inventory Update includes identified wetlands, woodlands, steep slopes, floodplains and overall prioritized natural features (a weighted combination of all identified natural features identified). These identified natural features may be regulated by the City's Tree Conservation Ordinance (Article III of Chapter 126 of City Ordinance), Wetland and Watercourse Protection Ordinance (Article IV of Chapter 126 of City Ordinance), Steep Slopes ordinance within the City's Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 2, Article 9 Natural Features of Chapter 138 Zoning of City Ordinance).

The updated NFI will be used by the City for planning purposes including, but not limited to, determining best engineering practices, proposed development impacts, appropriate areas to promote or require conservation and preservation of natural areas, and for overall long-term master planning, which would also include a determination if current City natural resource ordinances provide adequate protection of natural areas meeting the goals and objectives of the City's Master Land Use Plan. The updated NFI will allow all City departments to review updated natural resource extents to allow for more environmentally prudent and economically responsible development. The updated NFI identifies the current extent of potential existing wetlands, woodlands, steep slopes, floodplains, and overall natural features areas; these data were compiled, analyzed, and compared to previous NFI data as applicable to assess the City's success in managing these features.

The City discussed the draft Natural Features Inventory Update, including the draft Wetland Inventory Map at the 2024 Joint Meeting between the City Council and Planning Commission.

Pursuant to the Wetland and Watercourse Protection Ordinance, Article IV, Chapter 126, of the Code of Ordinances a notice was provided to legal owners of all properties that may be impacted by the Wetland Inventory Map including those properties where potential wetlands have been identified along with those properties where wetlands have been noted as being removed since 2005.

To help understand the changes to the Map, the City created an interactive map on the City's website (<http://rochesterhills.org/wetlandinventorymap>.) where property owners are able to explore their properties or any other property within the City to see where wetlands have remained the same, been added, or been removed since the 2005 inventory. It is important to note, that while certain areas may be delineated on the map as being a potential wetland area, each of these areas require professional site-specific investigation to determine the actual presence and extent of natural features on a specific site.

City Staff has fielded a limited number of calls and email inquiries from residents as to the nature of the mapping and how the wetlands map may or may not impact their own properties. Residents were provided the information specific to their property, that unless work was being done on their property, the simple notation that wetlands may be present on their site likely has limited impacts to them, and finally they were informed that as a part of the mapping process, a final wetlands determination that is site specific would need to be performed to determine the exact extent (if any) of wetland that may be present on a site.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that City Council accepts the 2024 Natural Features Inventory Update, which includes the Wetland Inventory Map as required by Section 126-496 of the City's Code of Ordinances.

APPROVALS:	SIGNATURE	DATE
Department Review		
Department Director		
Mayor		
Deputy City Clerk		

Contract Reviewed by City Attorney Yes N/A