

Sustainability Background Information

Sustainability is a core principle that ensures the City of Rochester Hills remains livable, resilient, and economically strong for future generations. As the Planning Commission plans for long-term growth, integrating sustainability into the master plan allows the City to address critical challenges such as infrastructure resilience, environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and community well-being. By considering sustainability, the Master Plan can be a roadmap that balances development with resource conservation, enhances quality of life, and positions our city as a leader in responsible planning.

Why Sustainability Matters

A sustainable community meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It strives to balance environmental health, economic growth, and social well-being. As the City evolves, long-range plans should support both current and future residents and businesses. By integrating sustainability into the master plan, the City can:

- Protect natural resources like clean air, water, and green spaces
- Build strong infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather and future demands
- Support businesses and jobs that provide long-term economic stability
- Foster a high quality of life with safe neighborhoods, good transportation options, and healthy lifestyles

Current Sustainability Initiatives

Sustainability planning is a shared effort that requires coordination between city departments, advisory boards, and community stakeholders. Various committees and commissions – as well as municipal staff - play a vital role in shaping and implementing policies that align with the master plan's goals. Their ongoing collaboration ensures that sustainability remains a priority in decision-making and that proposed strategies are both practical and impactful. This document is meant to serve as an initial understanding of the current sustainability initiatives found within Rochester Hills. A short breakdown of the role each department or board plays in improving and encouraging sustainability can be found below.

Boards and Commissions

[Brownfield Redevelopment Authority](#)

The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) meets four times a year (third Thursday of January, April, July, October). The role of the BRA is to help facilitate the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites in accordance with the State of Michigan's Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act.

The BRA can guide the development of environmentally hazardous sites and areas within the City. Brownfield redevelopment can be crucial in cities that are nearly built out and with limited amounts of undeveloped land. With the City nearly built out, the redevelopment of existing sites will play a crucial role in the long-term viability of the City. The BRA will play an important role in ensuring that environmentally hazardous sites are properly mitigated and ready to be re-developed.

[Clinton River Watershed Council](#)

The Clinton River Watershed Council (CRWC) is based in Rochester Hills. The Council works to ensure a future where the Clinton River is protected for future generations to enjoy. The Council sponsors cleanups and serves as an educational guide for the surrounding communities. In addition, the CRWC acts as a hub for research and stewardship programs that aim to restore and improve the vitality of the Clinton River. The Clinton River is an important natural resource and will be vital in ensuring that residents have access to clean water and accessible greenspace for future generations. The Council plays a critical role

in educating residents of Rochester Hills and southeast Michigan about the importance of clean waterways and natural resource management.

Deer Management Advisory Committee

The Deer Management Advisory Committee (DMAC) meets on an as needed basis and is comprised of 12 members. Seven members are citizens, two are City Council representatives, two are from the Parks & Natural Resources Department, and one member is from the Youth Council.

The goal of the DMAC is to review the City's ongoing efforts in controlling the deer population. This includes reviewing pertinent data, making recommendations to alter the City's management policies, and locating possible funding sources.

The interaction between residents and wildlife can add to the quality of life for people in Rochester Hills. On the other side, interactions between people and wildlife can lead to public health and safety concerns. Looking to the future, proper management of wildlife will play a critical role in the health and safety of Rochester Hills. The DMAC provides residents with a way to share feedback on how wildlife is managed within the City and provide information on how the City can improve its wildlife management.

Green Space Advisory Board (GSAB)

The Green Space Advisory Board (GSAB) meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The GSAB has a total of 14 members, 9 of which are citizens. The main purpose of the Board is to find ways to improve the City's strategies focused on preserving green spaces and improving access to parks and natural areas within the City. The GSAB makes recommendations to the City Council on how millage funds could best be spent to conserve and protect natural resources within the City.

The Board is able to provide direct feedback to City Administration and City Council. Citizens can attend meetings and share their thoughts on how the City could preserve more green space. Providing residents an opportunity to directly share their feedback plays a critical role in improving community engagement and transparency within the City. Based on the feedback that has been received from the Master Plan community engagement process, citizens have shown a clear interest in protecting and preserving greenspaces and open spaces.

Historic Districts Commission

The Historic Districts Commission (HDC) is tasked with managing the Historic Districts within the City. The HDC keeps track of potential additional historic districts and provides oversight of plans to perform work within historic districts. Maintaining historic buildings and districts preserves a community's history and character, which plays a key role in a community's sustainability. Preserving historic buildings and sites can ensure that community's character and history will be there for future generations to learn from. Establishing historic districts and designating buildings as historic can also add to the value of the properties and properties nearby, which improves a community's sustainability.

Local Development Finance Authority

The Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) is made up of seven members appointed by the Mayor and City Council, in addition to members representing the Avondale School Board, Rochester Community Schools, Oakland County, and Oakland Community College. Sustainability encompasses a variety of topics, not just environmental topics. Economic development plays a key role in a community's long-term sustainability and outlook. The LDFA's goal is to create economic growth and establish new economic and employment opportunities in the City.

In addition to the brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the LDFA is another tool in ensuring that Rochester Hills continues to be a great place for investment and innovation. The LDFA can assist with the

redevelopment of underutilized sites and sites that may have environmental hazards, which will enable the City to continue to invest in its residents and business community.

[Planning Commission](#)

The Planning Commission plays a key role in managing growth and development in Rochester Hills. There are a variety of different plans that the Planning Commission oversees and guides, which all have a direct impact on sustainability in the City. In addition to plan making and oversight, the Planning Commission performs site plan review and enforces the Ordinance standards to incoming developments. The Planning Commission plays a key role in the sustainability of Rochester Hills.

By leading the way on the Master Plan and Future Land use of the City, the Planning Commission is always looking to the future and ensuring that Rochester Hills continues to be a great place to live, work, and play. During the plan review process, the Planning Commission takes time to ensure that wetlands and woodlands are protected prior to any development or investment occurring in the community. Residents are able to attend and share their thoughts on projects and the Master Plan during the public hearing process, which provides residents an opportunity to participate in the development process.

[Public Safety and Infrastructure Committee](#)

Managing infrastructure and public safety is critical to ensuring a sustainable future for any community. The Public Safety and Infrastructure Committee is tasked with managing and analyzing funding for public safety and infrastructure improvements within the City. Ensuring that the City continues to invest in its residents starts with investing in infrastructure. Whether its roads, sewer lines, or pathways, the Committee focuses on ensuring that infrastructure within the City is maintained and accessible to all residents and visitors. Infrastructure is a core aspect of sustainability, and the Committees plays a key role in establishing a way for the City to review investment in infrastructure with the goal of quality and robust infrastructure that will be used by future generations.

[Paint Creek Trailways Commission](#)

The City of Rochester Hills participates in the Paint Creek Trailways Commission. Two delegates and two alternatives represent the City on the Commission (one citizen and one council representative). The Paint Creek Trail was a former rail line which was converted into a non-motorized trail. The trail provides residents in Rochester Hills and surrounding communities with 8.9 miles of walking and biking trails. Having access to non-motorized trails like the Paint Creek Trail provides an array of benefits for the residents of Rochester Hills. Ensuring that the Paint Creek Trail continues to be a key piece of regional recreational infrastructure for future generations will be important for Rochester Hills. Access to greenspace and nature can improve the overall health of community while also serving as a reason people may move to the City. Investing and maintaining the Paint Creek Trail will provide the City with a key piece of infrastructure that can improve their City's environmental economic sustainability.

[Water System Advisory Council](#)

The Water System Advisory Council (WSAC) provides oversight and recommendations on how water quality and access to water can be improved in Rochester Hills. A key focus of the Council is to educate residents on the danger of lead in drinking water and other issues that affect water quality in southeast Michigan. Access to clean drinking water is critical for residents. By establishing the Water System Advisory Council, the City provides residents and City staff with a way to educate and connect with residents about the importance of keeping water systems clean. Clean water also provides wildlife with habitats and protecting water resources in the City may also serve as a way to preserve greenspace and wetlands.

Departments

Every department of the City is tasked with providing adequate service to residents and ensuring that Rochester Hills continues to be a great place to live and work in. The departments listed below provide services that are directly tied to the sustainable development of the City. Whether it’s managing the built environment or natural resources, these departments play a critical role in ensuring that the decisions of today take into account the future.

- [Building, Ordinance, & Facilities](#)
- [Dept of Public Services \(DPS\)\Engineering](#)
- [Parks and Natural Resources](#)
- [Planning & Economic Development](#)

Resources

The City provides a vast number of resources for citizens. Each link below provides access to a few examples of the resources or plans that focus on sustainability within the City. Each resource is meant provide residents with relevant information and ways for them to get involved or participate in improving the sustainability within Rochester Hills.

- [Recycling & Hazardous Waste](#)
- [Stormwater](#)
- [Water Quality Report](#)
- [Parks and Recreation Plan](#)
- [Restoration & Remediation EGLE Grant](#)
- [Natural Features Inventory Update 2024](#)

Data

The data below provides an overview of the types of land uses and relevant environmental and climate data that plays a role in the everyday management of the City. A key data point is the overall increases in precipitation and temperature in Lower Michigan (which includes Rochester Hills). As the Master Plan update process continues to progress it will be important to keep in mind the current and future trends that show a clear change in the weather and climate patterns found in Michigan. The increased likelihood of precipitation events and higher temperatures are already having an effect on the City’s infrastructure and that trend will only continue in the near future.

Factor	Percentage of Land Use	Acreage
Natural areas	24.66%	5,193.43
Wetlands	9%	1,884.85
Woodlands	16%	3,298.26
Total land area	100%	21,062.70
Source: City of Rochester Hills 2024 Natural Features Inventory Update		

Factor	Rochester Hills	Oakland County
Open Space	33%	33%
Bare (soil, open fields, etc.)	2%	1%
Water (rivers, lakes, etc.)	1%	6%
Impervious coverage	29%	19.2%
Tree canopy coverage	42%	48.5%

Source: [SEMCOG 2020 Land Cover & 2022 Tree Canopy](#)

Changes in Precipitation in Southeast Lower Michigan (1953-2023)		
Time Period	Change in Inches	Percent Change (%)
Annual	+6.4	+21.18
Winter	+1.1	+19.92
Spring	+1.1	+19.20
Summer	+1.8	+19.08
Fall	+1.9	+27.04

Source: [GLISA Interactive Climatology Map](#)

Changes in Temperature in Southeast Lower Michigan (1953-2023)	
Time Period	Change in Temperature (°F)
Annual	+2.9
Winter	+4.1
Spring	+2.9
Summer	+2.2
Fall	+2.4

Source: [GLISA Interactive Climatology Map](#)

Future Sustainability Initiatives

The Master Plan Update provides an opportunity to look into programs or initiatives that could aid in improving the sustainability of the City. Down below are examples of programs or initiatives that City may consider joining as a way to demonstrate their commitment towards a more sustainable future. City Staff have already indicated that they are looking into participating in the Michigan Green Communities Challenge.

Michigan Green Communities Challenge

This challenge provides local governments to collaborate and work towards a common goal: a more sustainable and connected Michigan. The challenge promotes collaboration and interaction amongst local government officials and strives toward providing cities with resources that can aid in improving sustainability. The Michigan Green Communities program was developed by the Michigan Municipal League in coordination with EGLE's Catalyst Communities program.

Cities are able to use a [template](#) to help build their own sustainability plan. There are templates for a work plan, a sustainability plan, and a one-pager. The work plan is Excel based and provides an overview of the different components and data required for a sustainability plan.

Communities can partake in the Challenge and receive different levels of recognition based on their progress toward accomplishing sustainability goals. There are three levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

MGC CHALLENGE METRICS TEMPLATE				
To calculate metrics, fill out all yellow cells. The remaining cells will auto-populate with calculations. The charts will automatically update as you change the metrics and can be copied for use in other documents.				
	#	METRIC	UNIT	RESPONSE
Emissions	1	What is your current population?	# of people	
	2	When did your community complete a GHG inventory for municipal/county operations?	year	
	3	When did your community complete a community wide GHG inventory?	year	
	4	How many total metric tons of CO2e were being emitted in your GHG inventory for municipal/county operations?	Metric Tons CO2e (MTCO2e)	
	5	How many total metric tons of CO2e were being emitted in your GHG inventory for the entire community?	Metric Tons CO2e (MTCO2e)	
	6	Percent (%) reduction in GHG emissions from municipal/county operations from baseline year supplied above	% reduction in MTCO2e from baseline supplied in survey	#DIV/0!
			Current GHG Emissions in Municipal/County Operations	MTCO2e
	7	Percent (%) reduction in community wide GHG emissions from baseline year supplied above	% reduction in CO2e from baseline supplied in survey	#DIV/0!
		Current GHG Emissions	MTCO2e	

30 by 30 Challenge/America the Beautiful

The 30x30 Challenge is an initiative aimed at conserving 30% of the world's land, water, and coastal areas by 2030. The program is a result of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), which was adopted by 190 countries in 2022. The United States was one of those countries and added its own spin on the program.

America the Beautiful is the U.S.'s responses to the 30 by 30 challenge. The federal government has created a decade long challenge that aims to conserve, restore, and connect natural areas and greenspaces throughout the countries. Over \$1 billion in funding is available to accelerate the effectiveness of the 30 by 30 Challenge. The State of Michigan was a recipient of the grant funding and has created their own version of the program, Michigan the Beautiful.

Michigan the Beautiful

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is leading the State's version of the 30 by 30 Challenge. The process is underway and opportunities for cities and people to participate in workshops are planned to begin in the near future. The goal for 2024 is for the DNR to begin the process of mapping the current state of outdoor and natural areas, which will provide a baseline of how much available open space is available and how much is already conserved. The goal is for Michigan the Beautiful to run from 2025 to 2030 and collaborate with local governments to accomplish the goal of 30% of land and water to be conserved by 2030.

MI Healthy Climate Plan

The [MI Healthy Climate Plan](#) was released in 2022 and serves as the guiding document for the state and its goal to become a more sustainable and resilient place for people to live, work, and play. The main goal of the plan is to reach 100% carbon neutrality by 2050. Overall, there are seven objectives that the Plan incorporates.

1. Mitigate the worst impacts of climate change
2. Spur economic development and create good-paying jobs
3. Protect and improve the health of Michiganders
4. Position Michigan as a leader in climate action
5. Protect our natural resources and wildlife
6. Make Michigan energy independent
7. Address environmental injustices

Since the adoption of the Plan, there have been two annual reports ([2022](#) & [2023](#)) that provide an overview of how the State of Michigan is progressing towards the goals and objectives laid out in the plan. Overall, the Plan should be seen as an opportunity for Rochester Hills to participate and potential become a leader in reaching the goals and objectives of the Plan.

Sustainability and the Master Plan Update

- Discussion: How should the sustainability lens become integrated into the Master Plan?
 - Setting the table for a future, standalone Sustainability Plan
 - Review of land use proposals
 - Additional strategies and policies that can be implemented
 - Highlight past and current City sustainability initiatives
 - What else can the City do?