

Overview of Sustainability Priorities Discussion

Background

The 2018 Master Plan sought to promote sustainability by supporting changing modes of transportation, protecting natural resources, promoting low impact building techniques, and preserving green spaces and natural features. Preserving natural resources and other aspects of sustainability continue to be important to the community. What does that look like in terms of long-range planning? In our upcoming workshop, the Planning Commission will be asked to provide feedback and participate in a discussion on how the Master Plan should implement and emphasize sustainability into the Plan.

Discussion Guide

The February 18th Planning Commission study session will use sustainability topic cards to help guide the discussion. In total there are 16 different topics that are represented in the form of a card. The cards are split into four (4) different categories: **Infrastructure**, **Environment**, **Community**, and **Economy**. The topic cards cover potential citywide sustainability topics that may inform the recommendations and goals found within the Master Plan. The cards and discussion are intended to get the Planning Commission to discuss and provide direction on how sustainability will be included in the Master Plan.

During the meeting, the Planning Commission will be paired up into four (4) groups of two (2) Commissioners. Each pair will be given a set of topic cards, a bracket, and an extra piece of paper for them to share any additional feedback they may have.

The bracket will be divided into four “divisions” based on the sustainability categories. Each pair of Commissioners will be asked to discuss each matchup and decide which sustainability topic will move on to the next round. The goal of the discussion is to decide which sustainability factors the Commissioners believe are the strongest and should be a part of the sustainability discussion in the Master Plan. The additional piece of note paper will ask the Commissioners to share if they believe any of the topic cards specifically apply to any of the Planning Neighborhood Areas. The Planning Commission will also be able to share if they believe any topics are missing, discuss the sample strategies (What wouldn't work in Rochester Hills? What is missing?) and provide any additional feedback regarding sustainability and the Master Plan.

Sustainability Priority Topics - **Infrastructure**, **Environment**, **Community**, **Economy**

- **Infrastructure:**
 - Bikeable and walkable community
 - Improved stormwater management
 - More options for managing materials such as recycling and composting
 - Provide alternative modes of transportation
- **Environment:**
 - Reduce the amount of food waste
 - Wildlife and habitat preservation
 - Facilitate renewable energy production
 - Update landscape standards for new development
- **Community:**
 - Improve resiliency during weather emergencies
 - Age-friendly places to meet and connect with others
 - Weatherization and maintenance of existing homes
 - Promote a Healthy and Active Lifestyle
- **Economy:**
 - Research innovative technologies (EV's, AI, etc.)
 - Quality local jobs
 - Support employers and attract new businesses
 - Supported workforce

Bikeable and Walkable Community



Imagine people of all ages being able to get to places they frequent within the community, with connector trails linking to places outside the community. All the places people could go!

This could look like:

- Safety improvements for pedestrians/cyclists
- Completing the network by installing sidewalks or bike paths
- Require mixed-use zoning in strategic locations to reduce travel distances between housing and important community destinations.
- Safe routes to school programming
- Educational programs and resources on best biking practices

Managing Materials (Recycling and Composting)



Recycling and composting allow communities to stay clean while also reusing materials for other purposes. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

This could look like:

- Encouraging the use of reusable materials for new developments
- Incentivizing businesses to reduce packaging waste and encourage reusable alternatives
- Exploring zoning standards to support compost centers and circular economy businesses such as repair shops and material reuse centers
- Expand curbside recycling and composting programs for residents and businesses.
- Require construction/demolition waste recycling for large-scale projects

Improved Stormwater Management



Flooding has the potential to destroy property and overwhelm water systems such as sewers and stormwater causing streets to become dirty. Stay dry!

This could look like:

- Adding green infrastructure and low-impact development requirements for City projects or for new developments
- Review lot coverage requirements and options for permeable pavement
- Working with HOA's to understand current and future stormwater needs
- Running an education campaign about not littering to keep drains free of debris
- Enhance riparian buffers and wetland protection to improve water quality.

Alternative Modes of Transportation



Traffic adds more congestion, imposes safety hazards for pedestrians, pollutes our air. Providing residents with different ways to get around the community can lead to reduced traffic. Less traffic makes for a happier commute!

This could look like:

- Supporting improvements to regional transit systems (SMART/FAST) that improve accessibility and service
- Educating residents on the benefits of alternative modes of transportation and the options that are available to them
- Supporting micro-transit such as appointment-only shuttle services
- Rechargeable scooters or bike sharing programs
- Exploring zoning changes to support transit-oriented development

Age-friendly Places to Meet with Others



Public spaces are great places to interact with people. Ensuring that parks and open spaces are age-friendly will ensure that everyone can connect with nature and one another. Get out there, kid!

This could look like:

- Require accessible design for public spaces, including seating, shade, and safe crossings.
- Nurture intergenerational programs to foster social connections.
- Encourage mixed-use developments with cafes, parks, and gathering spaces.
- Develop "third places" (beyond home and work) such as libraries, senior centers, and social hubs.
- Support transportation options that enable older adults to reach social destinations easily.

Weatherization and Maintenance of Existing Housing



Much of the existing housing supply requires maintenance, care, and upgrades to be more energy efficient. These things can be costly, with long returns on investment.

This could look like:

- The community applying for federal/state funding for home energy upgrades
- Sharing funding opportunities for home weatherization and upgrades
- Setting up a timebank for people to offer their expertise in weatherization in exchange for other services
- Require rental housing to meet weatherization and insulation standards.
- Promote green roofs and other passive cooling techniques to reduce energy costs.

Improve Resiliency During Weather Emergencies



Extreme weather events are becoming more common. Suburbanized areas require more resources during times of extreme weather or weather emergencies. Ensuring that Rochester Hills residents have access to information and resources to help them during potential emergencies improves their resiliency in the long run.

This could look like:

- Educating residents on what to do during extreme weather events
- Encourage neighborhood-based resilience plans for vulnerable and difficult to reach populations (elderly, disabled, children, etc.)
- Support microgrids and battery storage to provide backup power during outages

Promote a Healthy and Active Lifestyle



Residents have no shortage of access to great parks and open spaces. Dedicating resources and time to ensuring the current level of service and access will be important in the long run. Providing opportunities for residents to participate in healthy and active lifestyles improves their quality of life.

This could look like:

- Encourage and support fitness and wellness clubs and organizations
- Promote educational programs and resources for residents on healthy eating and wellbeing
- Implement additional ways for residents to connect with nature and existing trails, parks, and open space
- Encourage walkable neighborhoods with amenities within a short distance of homes.

Wildlife and Habitat Preservation



Preserving land for wildlife helps keep the natural ecosystem intact and helps native species flourish. The birds will thank you!

This could look like:

- Designating certain land as protected greenspace, thereby not allowing development to take place
- Require native and “near-native” plant landscaping to support local ecosystems.
- Maintain existing greenspaces
- Establish wildlife corridors and protected greenways to maintain habitat connectivity.
- Actively encourage preventing pollution through trash pick-up
- Sharing information about conservation of private property through the Land Conservancy

Update Landscape Standards for New Development



Updated landscape standards can promote sustainability and beautification within the community. Improved landscape standards can increase the number of trees and amount of open space which have a positive effect on the built environment. Let’s keep Rochester Hills beautiful!

This could look like:

- Updating Ordinance standards that promote improved landscaping for new developments
- Promoting native species to provide habitats for animals
- Improving the aesthetics and design of new development to better fit within the community

Reduce Food Waste



40% of the food produced in the United States turns into waste. Reducing the amount of food waste can save communities and residents money. A reduction in food waste also promotes a healthier and happier environment. Let’s make a difference one banana peel at a time!

This could look like:

- Establishing an inventory of the current level of food waste within the community
- Provide educational programs and resources for residents
- Establish community guidelines for residents and businesses
- Require food waste reduction plans for large commercial developments.

Facilitate Renewable Energy Production



Imagine charging our phones from the sun! We all use a lot of energy daily for many of our activities. Sourcing energy from renewable sources such as the sun or wind can drive down utility bills and reduce air pollution. Charge on!

This could look like:

- Designate specific land uses to allow alternative energy sources (solar, wind)
- Streamline permitting processes for residential and commercial renewable energy projects.
- Incentivize new and existing developments to install renewable energy technologies

Research and Foster Innovative Technologies



Innovation is a core principle of Rochester Hills. The world is constantly changing and new advancements in technology are constantly occurring. Whether it's EV's or Artificial Intelligence (AI), Rochester Hills can continue to be a leader in innovation!

This could look like:

- Collaborating with Oakland University and other higher education institutions
- Implementing EV's into the municipal fleet or establishing municipal charging stations
- Incorporating AI into to improve City operations
- Promote public-private partnerships for tech-driven solutions in transportation, energy, and waste management.
- Ensure broadband access and smart infrastructure to support digital innovation.

Support Employers and Attract New Businesses



Imagine more locally-owned businesses that understand the community and its needs and values, more jobs, and more innovation. Rochester Hills is a leader in attracting and retaining businesses. Whether it's small businesses or new chains, attracting new businesses makes the community more sustainable in the long run...Cheers to that!

This could look like:

- Streamline permitting and regulatory processes for business development.
- Create business incubator space
- Promote and increase mentorship opportunities for new business owners
- Research potential existing development or redevelopment sites

Facilitate Creating Quality Local Jobs



Employment that provides fair compensation and good benefits is needed in every community. Local jobs keep money circulating in the community and have high multiplier effects. Cha-ching!

This could look like:

- Collaborating with area partners to understand needs for local job creation
- Develop mixed-use zoning that allows live-work-play communities.
- Encouraging entrepreneurship through business incubation and co-working spaces
- Streamline permitting and reduce regulatory barriers for small business creation.

Support the Workforce



Employers want to locate in places where they know they can find competent employees. For many positions, this requires some education and skill attainment before applying. Grab your number two pencils!

This could look like:

- Partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to understand workforce skills needed
- Promoting trade and apprenticeship programs
- Supporting schools in preparing students for the workforce
- Expand access to affordable childcare and family-friendly workplace policies
- Support transportation and housing alternatives to ensure employees can live near their jobs