

June 7, 2011

Pittsfield Charter Township Planning Commission
Pittsfield Charter Township
6201 W. Michigan Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

RE: Draft Pittsfield Master Plan

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft Pittsfield Master Plan. The City of Ann Arbor Planning Commission and Planning & Development Services staff have reviewed this draft document. I have provided a list of comments below:

General Observations

1. The document is reader friendly and generously illustrated with graphics and figures, which helps convey points being made in the text and helps make the document easy to read.
2. We applaud the strong emphasis on sustainable planning principles such as pedestrian access, natural systems preservation, transit, green buildings, carbon footprint, and watershed considerations.
3. The Arts and Culture section is an innovative element for a master plan. Linking arts and culture to historic preservation is also consistent with sound planning principles.
4. The personas are a thought-provoking way of presenting the survey results.
5. The section on gateway treatment is a great component of the plan.

Questions

1. Why does the agricultural area allow a higher density (1 du/ac min) than the suburban residential area (2.5 du/ac min)?
2. Is the density recommendation of 1 du/ac for agricultural areas an existing recommendation or does the new plan increase this density?

3. Do existing zoning and parking standards support the mixed use village concept such as was illustrated at State and Ellsworth? What type of code amendments will be necessary to encourage more sustainable development? Does the plan recommend specific code amendments?
4. How would the Township respond if traditional big box or strip retail development were proposed in areas proposed for mixed use centers?
5. The plan shows conceptual illustrations that depict new mixed use development fronting busy arterials. This helps readers understand what the plan's vision is for these areas. Were design issues such as appropriate pedestrian access, truck deliveries, solid waste storage and adequate parking considered? Have traffic noise mitigation measures been considered to support new residential uses along these busy corridors?
6. Does the plan include any proposed increase or decrease in density to support the recommendations (e.g. reduced residential densities in agricultural areas; increased densities in village centers)?

Recommendations

1. You might consider adding options regarding compact horizontal mixed use development, in addition to vertical mixed use. This development pattern is an interim situation that might be more likely to develop over the next 5-20 years.
2. On page 35 (density), the term "non-traditional use" should be defined.
3. On page 97 (successful economy) the regional assets map could be enhanced by naming the hospitals and identifying other major employment centers such as the State Street corridor and downtown Ann Arbor.
4. The plan should be commended for including language that supports agricultural uses. However, the proposed density of 1 du/ac minimum will reduce the likelihood that agricultural uses will remain in the township.
5. In the Transportation section, detailed cross-sections are provided, but there were fewer details about recommendations for traffic-calming, parking management and accessibility. Additional detail about these tools in the master plan will help support implementation efforts.
6. In the Neighborhood cross-section (page 62), there is no indication of accommodation for cyclists. Are bicycles anticipated to ride on neighborhood streets? If so, it would be helpful to add this to the labeling.
7. In the Rural cross-section (page 62), the image doesn't reinforce the text's statement that a minimum 5-foot wide bicycle lane is desired. Also, a recommendation for removing rumble strips from the shoulder would support bicycle travel in rural areas.
8. The nodal concept identified in the plan opens up opportunities for discussion about nodes that cross jurisdictional lines. In particular, the nodes at State and Ellsworth and Ann Arbor/Saline and I-94 and the Washtenaw corridor call for coordination between the city and township to make these areas economically viable and accessible. While we recognize that the Township needs to complete this plan in a timely way, we are hoping that some graphic representation of the city's land use recommendations for these nodes could be added to maps, in

addition to examples about joint coordination opportunities. For instance, pedestrian facilities on the Ann Arbor-Saline/I-94 overpass are essential to improving this node on both sides of the freeway. Aligning the names and descriptions of land use categories between the two jurisdictions is another approach worth examining.

9. The “Successful Economy” section indicates that, “Pittsfield Township has the critical advantage of being located to the immediate south of the City of Ann Arbor and providing an Ann Arbor mailing address while placing a much lower tax burden on businesses”. It should be noted that by far the largest tax burden on both City and Township businesses is for school systems, which the plan rightfully notes is competitive advantage for attracting residents. Given this fact, the statement can be interpreted as indicating that Pittsfield Township is a better place to do business than the City of Ann Arbor. This can also be interpreted as being inconsistent with language in the same chapter that emphasizes regional cooperation. City of Ann Arbor taxpayers support the economic vitality of the region by subsidizing transit service to outlying communities, providing an outstanding park and recreation system available free of charge to Township residents, providing recycling and composting facilities that are available to township residents, maintaining roads and non-motorized facilities that township residents depend on to get to work and services, and contributing substantially to human service organizations that provide a safety net for County residents. The plan would be more successful in emphasizing inter-jurisdictional cooperation if it highlighted those things that the Township is doing to benefit the region rather than indicating that it is a better place to do business than the City of Ann Arbor.