

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING

March 25, 2013

Town Hall Room, Meridian Municipal Building
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864

Regular Meeting

1. Call meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.
2. Approval of agenda
3. Approval of minutes
 - A. March 11, 2013 Regular Meeting
4. Public remarks
5. Communications
6. Public Hearings
 - A. *Special Use Permit #13031 (Public Works and Engineering), request to work in the 100-year floodplain to construct a pedestrian/bicycle pathway bridge over the Eberly Drain between Jo Pass Dr. and the Interurban Pathway.
7. Unfinished Business
 - A. Special Use Permit #13021 (Zahra), locate a religious institution, a non-residential use in a residential district at 4133 Okemos Road zoned RA (Single Family-Medium Density) residential
 - B. *Special Use Permit #13031 (Public Works and Engineering), request to work in the 100-year floodplain to construct a pedestrian/bicycle pathway bridge over the Eberly Drain between Jo Pass Dr. and the Interurban Pathway
 - C. Rezoning #13010 (Planning Commission), rezone 5691 Babbitt Street from C-2 (Commercial) to RB (Single Family-Medium Density) residential
8. Other Business
 - A. Master Plan Objective: Redevelopment Readiness
 - B. Future Work Session Discussion: Master Plan Update

*Please note the Planning Commission may make a decision the same night as the public hearing regarding cases preceded by an asterisk ("**").

Planning Commission Agenda

March 25, 2013

Page 2

9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports
10. New Applications
 - A. PUD #13-05044 (Champion Woods), request for a minor amendment to rearrange boundaries between units 39, 40 and 41.
11. Site Plans received
12. Site Plans approved
 - A. Site Plan Review #12-94-9 (Jesus Melendez/Keystone Design Group Architects), request for Phase II remodeling (add covered walkway along front façade) of former restaurant building for Fiesta Charra at 5990 Park Lake Road, East Lansing.
13. Public Remarks
14. Adjournment

Post Script: John Scott-Craig

The Planning Commission's Bylaws state agenda items shall not be introduced for discussion or public hearing that is opened after 10:00 p.m. The chair may approve exceptions when this rule would cause substantial backlog in Commission business (Rule 5.14 Limit on Introduction of Agenda Items).

Persons wishing to appeal a decision of the Planning Commission to the Township Board in the granting of a Special Use Permit must do so within ten (10) days of the decision of the Planning Commission (Sub-section 86-189 of the Zoning Ordinance).

**TENTATIVE
PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA
April 8, 2013
Regular Meeting 7:00 p.m.**

Regular Meeting

1. Public Hearings

2. Unfinished Business
 - A. Zoning Amendment #13020 (Planning Commission), request to amend Section 86-2 Definitions and Section 86-564 Yard Encroachments Permitted to update and clarify regulations for decks and patios

3. Other Business
 - A. Mixed Use Planned Unit Development Concept Plan Review: 2099 Hamilton Road and 2095 Hamilton Road

G:\PLANNING\Plan Comm\AGENDAS\2012\13-25-13 agenda.doc

Please note the Planning Commission may make a decision the same night as the public hearing regarding cases preceded by an asterisk ("").

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 11, 2013

DRAFT

5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room, 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Commissioners Cordill, Deits, Hildebrandt, Ianni, Jackson, Norkin (7:02 P.M.), Salehi,
Scott-Craig
ABSENT: Commissioner Honicky
STAFF: Principal Planner Gail Oranchak

1. Call meeting to order

Chair Jackson called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. She introduced the newest member of the Planning Commission, James Salehi.

2. Approval of agenda

Commissioner Scott-Craig moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Cordill moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 11, 2013. Seconded by Commissioner Hildebrandt.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0.

4. Public Remarks

Chair Jackson opened the floor for public remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke to the need for transparency by posting packets the Friday before a Planning Commission meeting. He spoke in opposition to the Hannah Farms Phase 3 Concept Plan.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, believed Hannah Farms Phase 3 should be brought to the Planning Commission as a major amendment to the previous MUPUD and believed Phase 3 housing is the same as Phases 1 and 2, not as originally presented.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

5. Communications (None)

6. Public hearings

A. Special Use Permit #13021 (Zahra), locate a religious institution, a non-residential use in a residential district at 4133 Okemos Road zoned RA (Single Family-Medium Density) residential

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:08 P.M.

- Introduction by the Chair (announcement of procedures, time limits and protocols for public participation and applicants)
- Summary of subject matter

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the special use permit (SUP) request as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 7, 2013.

- Applicant
Dr. Ali Saeed, 1985 Groton Way, East Lansing, availed himself for Planning Commission questions.

Liz Harrow, Architect, 1147 Daisy Lane, East Lansing, also availed herself for Planning Commission questions.

- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Ianni stated the request is in keeping with the surrounding character of the community and granting this request would not change that character.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired as to who is the owner of the property.

Dr. Saeed stated the acquisition of this property is in progress and a purchase agreement has been signed by the current owner, Dr. Shannon Wiggins and Zahra Institute.

Commissioner Deits inquired if Zahra has a religious exemption from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Dr. Saeed responded that a religious exemption has been filed, but the official status is still pending.

Commissioner Salehi asked when the request was filed.

Dr. Saeed indicated approximately two (2) months ago.

Commissioner Salehi inquired as to the average turnaround time for an IRS decision on the religious exemption.

Dr. Naji, 1090 Harrington Lane, East Lansing, indicated that because of the income tax season, it may take some time.

Commissioner Salehi inquired if Zahra had not previously been a non-profit organization certified as a 501 (c)(3). He stated because Zahra has already submitted its application, he was told it was a non-profit organization "for the time being."

Commissioner Salehi explained the 501 (c)(3) certification is a decision made by the IRS and applicant is not a non-profit organization until the decision is rendered.

Commissioner Deits added the non-profit status is not the key as the ordinance exempts religious institutions, not non-profits, which allows for the SUP application.

Commissioner Salehi inquired as to what constitutes a "religious institution."

Principal Planner Oranchak responded she will provide that information the next time this special use permit application comes before the Planning Commission.

Chair Jackson asked if verification of ownership and agreement from the current owner for this special use permit request is available.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded that information is in the Township's file.

Commissioner Ianni noted the applicant stated he received an employer identification number (EIN) from the IRS, but asked if any certification had been received from the state.

Dr. Naji responded a tax identification number was acquired from the state.

Commissioner Ianni explained that a 501 (c)(3) is not required to qualify as a religious institution.

Commissioner Deits addressed the irony that if the property was rezoned to PO, the applicant would be able to have the facility by right regardless of its religious affiliation or status with the IRS. He explained the prior decision by the electorate regarding the rezoning referendum.

Ms. Harrow noted she brought this up to the applicant, as she was before the Planning Commission when it dealt with the original rezoning request by the current owner.

Commissioner Cordill asked the applicant if there are plans for more than a house of worship.

Mr. Saeed indicated there are no plans to go beyond worship at this time and no plans to have formal services at a set time and schedule with a designated pastor. He clarified the applicant has no affiliation with the previous attempts at obtaining a rezoning for this property.

Commissioner Salehi inquired as to projection of membership within a year.

Dr. Naji stated the group has grown gradually to 20 families and projected up to 30-35 families.

Mr. Saeed stated this group was not "planned", but has evolved and, as such, there has not been any tracked migration pattern. He added that as the number of families has grown, there has been the commensurate number of additional cars in neighborhoods where the group met. Mr. Saeed noted it is difficult to project if there will be like-minded families who wish to be part of the institute in the future.

Commissioner Salehi noted there are 20 parking spaces available and expressed concern where the applicant proposed a potential of 30 vehicles.

Principal Planner Oranchak added the applicant is proposing 21 on the site plan.

Mr. Saeed stated it is typical for a large number of families to car pool to an event, so there is no expectation for 35 cars to be at the site at any one time. He added talks have taken place with the architect about expansion of parking in the future if necessary.

Ms. Harrow added land is available, but suggested entering into a parking agreement with neighboring office buildings.

Chair Jackson noted based on staff analysis, there is sufficient parking based on projected usage.

Commissioner Deits noted it is a highly appropriate use of the property and the Township will work with the applicant to make sure it complies with all requirements.

Chair Jackson expressed appreciation that the site will be put to good use. She asked staff how a decision made to rezone to this property to better meet the design of the Master Plan would impact the SUP.

Principal Planner Oranchak did not believe rezoning would be an issue.

Commissioner Hildebrandt believed the proposed use to be compatible with the site and liked the setback from the road.

Commissioner Norkin believed if the property is sold to another institution, the SUP would remain with the land. He inquired if the applicant would object to Planning Commission placement of a condition regarding noise associated with services in proximity to a neighborhood.

Mr. Saeed indicated he did not believe there would be any objection, as the congregation would not want to be a disruptive presence to any local business, office or the neighboring residential area.

Commissioner Ianni expressed concern with "carving out" a special circumstance for a specific religion, and indicated the noise ordinance applies to all people within the community and is sufficient.

Commissioner Norkin inquired as to what is permitted in the Township's noise ordinance relative to religious institutions regarding church bells and loud speakers.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded there is nothing specific to religious institutions in the noise ordinances.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 7:39 P.M.

- B. Rezoning #13010 (Planning Commission), rezone 5691 Babbitt Street from C-2 (Commercial) to RB (Single Family-Medium Density) residential

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:39 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 7, 2013.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Commissioner Ianni stated the proposed rezoning is in conformance with the Master Plan, is compatible with the surrounding character of the neighborhood and would not be a burden to neighbors.

Commissioner Deits inquired as to the origin of the little "jog" adjacent to the northwest corner of the property.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is a small piece of commercially zoned land and is connected to property with frontage on Haslett Road. She indicated it is not a parcel unto itself.

Commissioner Salehi asked what would be the change in tax burden to the property owners as a result of the rezoning.

Principal Planner Oranchak stated she was uncertain, but would investigate and report back to the Commission.

Commissioner Jackson stated that although the property has been used as residential for many years, the 2005 Master Plan changed the designation from commercial to residential.

Principal Planner Oranchak added the residential zoning will now be consistent with the Master Plan.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 7:48 P.M.

- C. Zoning Amendment #13020 (Planning Commission), request to amend Section 86-2 Definitions and Section 86-564 Yard Encroachments Permitted to update and clarify regulations for decks and patios

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing at 7:48 P.M.

- Summary of subject matter
Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the rezoning request as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 7, 2013.
- Planning Commission discussion:
Chair Jackson inquired of fellow Commissioners if the proposed revision is an improvement over the current language.

Commissioner Deits questioned the definition of an enclosed porch.

Principal Planner pointed to language regarding open air structures for clarification. She noted that once a structure is built which can be enclosed, it becomes part of the principal structure.

Commissioner Deits expressed concern with the "capable of being enclosed" clause v. all the remaining clauses dealing with partly open patios.

Principal Planner Oranchak explained if there is a patio with a pergola over it, staff would not interpret that as "capable of being enclosed."

Chair Jackson believed part of the difficulty is the definition of enclosed and should be clarified.

Commissioner Deits suggested that the act of enclosing a structure should be the trigger, not whether the structure is capable of being enclosed.

Principal Planner Oranchak clarified the language in question is in the existing ordinance and is being replaced.

Commissioner Salehi inquired how carefully Planning Commissioners need to scrutinize and "fine tune" this language.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded it is up to individual members to bring their concerns forward, but staff would like it "fine tuned" as it moves forward to the Board.

Commissioner Ianni indicated Section 86-564 (f) addresses wheelchair ramps and asked if it is necessary to obtain a variance under the current ordinance in order to construct a wheelchair ramp.

Principal Planner Oranchak noted the current ordinance has no mention of wheelchair ramps and contains a restriction on the amount of encroachment into different yards, necessitating requests for variances in the past to install wheelchair ramps.

Commissioner Ianni asked if the new provision in (f) would eliminate the need for a variance.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Scott-Craig inquired as to the rationale for the deck or patio being 15 feet from the rear lot line contained in proposed Section 86-564 (a) (4).

Principal Planner Oranchak stated the reason for that was to have some setback for neighbors.

Commissioner Scott-Craig expressed concern this provision may make some existing patios non-conforming and unable to be upgraded.

Commissioner Scott-Craig believed the 15 foot setback is arbitrary and, in some cases, restrictive.

Principal Planner Oranchak indicated the intent with the proposed setback was to preserve privacy and asked for input on a different setback distance.

Commissioner Deits pointed to language contained in the heading of Section 85-564 (d) regarding accessory features on decks, patios and open porches but yet the prohibitions addresses decks only.

Principal Planner Oranchak explained staff rationale was to separate that subsection into two parts: the first was what is not allowed and the second part would be about the accessory features that could be affixed.

Commissioner Deits asked what the safety issue was for a concrete patio having a wood burning fire pit on it.

Principal Planner Oranchak believed the current Fire Ordinance contains language regarding a setback requirement from the principal structure for similar items. She indicated staff will look further into this issue.

Chair Jackson added this language is specific to wood burning and would not apply to charcoal and gas.

Principal Planner Oranchak added that in certain circumstances, charcoal is not allowed in proximity to a principal residence (e.g., multi-family housing complexes).

Commissioner Norkin expressed his desire for language which allows for seasonal enclosures.

Principal Planner Oranchak added that enclosures are not prohibited. She added that any roof which is constructed over an area is going to need a building permit.

Commissioner Norkin inquired if a retractable roof would require a building permit.

Principal Planner Oranchak was unsure, but believed retractable roofs are made of fabric. She thought this to be a different scenario than a roof structure which has supports and could be enclosed in the future, at which point it becomes part of the principal building and is no longer an accessory.

Commissioner Norkin asked if commissioners could email further suggestions to staff.

Principal Planner Oranchak responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Deits suggested language stating "Use of fire will be in compliance with the Township's Fire Code" will adequately address what is attempted in (d). He added that use of such language will allow for congruency when the Fire Code changes.

Chair Jackson reminded fellow Commissioners that this ordinance language deals more with setbacks and what constitutes an accessory relative to setbacks.

Commissioner Deits concurred with Commissioner Scott-Craig regarding questionable need for such a large setback (15 feet) from the rear lot line to address privacy. He expressed comfort with an eight (8) foot setback.

Principal Planner Oranchak stated current language allows for an eight (8) foot encroachment into the setback, which depth varies dependent upon the residential zoning designation. She indicated the proposed language would create one standard and 15 feet is more than currently allowed by ordinance.

Chair Jackson closed the public hearing at 8:13 P.M.

7. Unfinished Business (None)

8. Other Business

- A. Hannah Farms Phase 3 Concept Plan: Capstone Collegiate Communities "Local Lofts of East Lansing"

Principal Planner Oranchak briefly summarized the concept plan for Hannah Farms Phase 3 as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 7, 2013.

Mark Clouse, Legal Counsel and Chief Financial Officer, Eyde Co., 4660 S. Hagadorn Road, East Lansing, clarified this project is not to be considered as a continuation of Phase 1 and 2, but a mixed use portion of the Hannah Farms plan that was adopted several years ago. He noted the concept is for market rate housing (available to anyone who wishes to live there and meets the criteria for leasing) and a retail component. Mr. Clouse capsulized previous Planning Commission and Board discussion regarding the viability of retail and indicated it will be a "convertable" component. Mr. Clouse summarized the general concept plan.

John Acken, Executive Vice President Capstone Collegiate Communities, 431 Office Park Drive, Birmingham, Alabama noted two issues rose to the surface as conceptual plans were created: scale/size of the project and the retail component. He highlighted the two schemes as shown in the staff memorandum.

Planning Commission and applicant discussion:

- Property owner's presentation of alternate conceptual plans if the proposal does not include mixed use as there is no demand for retail at the current time and the addition of acreage to the south for a hotel
- Eighty (80) acre site is already mixed use
- Continued concern with traffic in the area of Hannah Boulevard and Hagadorn Road as well as the railroad tracks
- Concern with lack of walking paths
- Underground parking more desirable than hiding it in the center of buildings, especially with a potential hotel on the site
- Underground parking brings higher value to the developer
- Suggestion to look at the parking "big picture" for the entire Eyde development region
- Piecemeal mixed use is a bad practice
- Inquiry if demographic study was undertaken regarding the need for a hotel
- Suggestion for an incubator instead of retail
- Rationale for having East Lansing included in the name
- Office space already in existence in the Hannah Plaza area
- Market study done signified adequate demand for a conventional hotel
- Proximity to Michigan State University (MSU) indicates residents will have some sort of affiliation to the university
- There will be transit in and out of this development
- Different unit types will be the draw to attract a variety of residents
- Concern with Capstone Collegiate Communities' (CCC) website statement that it continues to focus on some aspect of student housing
- Continued concern with no "global" vision for this entire project
- Transportation plan for the entire project is still not being presented to the Planning Commission and is not conducive to collaborative planning
- Request for a working example of where first floor housing has been converted to first floor retail
- Fundamental concern that building retail which doesn't fill will "cannibalize" existing retail
- Street parking in front of the retail strip is not workable
- Economy has drastically changed since the 2008 conceptual plan was presented
- More of the medical component of MSU is moving onto the Hannah property
- Difficulty in creating a pathway plan on this site when the Township does not have a master plan on how to connect to this site
- Possibility of constructing an additional building in the future where the parking lot in front of the six (6) story building is currently located to address potential retail needs
- Design challenges regarding buffers for the units overlooking the parking area
- Concern with over concentration of student housing
- Diverse housing will help retail to follow
- Suggestion for inclusion of a small grocery store in the "area"
- Existing commercial establishments have seen revenues increase as much as 30% as a result of some of the residential construction
- Apartment rental vacancy rates
- Central Park Apartments and Club Meridian have an occupancy rate in the upper 90 percentile over the last 12-18 months
- Money for financing leans toward multifamily residential projects
- Concern with additional student housing at the western end locking all eighty (80) acres into a student housing area
- Preference to have had the alumni village and retirement center on the parcel "across the bridge" on one end and all the student housing at the western end where you are currently looking to develop

- Suggestion to schedule a series of work sessions with MSU, Ingham County Department of Transportation and Roads (ICDTR), Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) and developers regarding multimodal transportation
- Underground parking preferable to surface lots or a structure surrounded by apartments
- Challenge with underground parking is the expensive ventilation systems
- Rental rates to compensate for construction of underground parking would price the developer "out of the market"
- Request for the developer to provide information as to the added cost per unit when underground parking is included
- Large buildings close to the street are undesirable as a pedestrian in Meridian Township
- Concern with lack of open space for residents in the Phase 3 design
- Preference for the rectangular park area south of the proposal to be enlarged which would aid in walkability
- Request for a list of the five (5) empty retail spaces mentioned earlier in the Hannah Plaza
- Foot or bicycle path across the river and railroad would exit you out to Foods for Living, Grand River and the #1 bus route
- Applicant does not own the property, but is willing to talk with Ingham County again
- Primary issue is travel from all three (3) phases to the MSU campus
- Multi modal transportation plan still needs to be developed for the remainder of the complex to safely travel west to MSU
- Non student housing does not need a clubhouse
- Appreciation for statement by the developer regarding the possibility of using the first floor of the commercial building for retail when retail is needed
- Open space is key to draw non-student residents
- Survey from current residents as to what they would like in non-housing establishments other than retail
- Concrete information as to what it will take to build an underground parking structure
- Concrete information which address concerns regarding traffic and bicycle pathways
- Integration of indoor and outdoor activities regarding physical fitness
- Based on information presented by the applicant in 2008, a better mix of housing types is required
- Student housing is included in the definition of multi-family
- Phase 3 proposed to have at least 50% of the units as studio, one (1) and two (2) bedrooms units (market rate units) and the previous phases were weighted towards four (4) bedroom units (student housing)
- Phase 1 and 2 has a total of 364 units
- Retail requires visibility from the road
- A townhouse development would be more attractive to diverse population
- MSU class created a number of alternative designs for Phase 2 as an exercise and found that first and second level parking was not a major increase in cost over surface parking and allowed for a great deal of open space and a more aesthetically pleasing project
- Preference to include East Lansing in the name as a marketing tool as Meridian Township does not have the visibility as an entity
- Families will require play structures and areas to walk pets
- First floor could be used as galleries, meeting spaces, conference rooms, etc.
- Traffic signal at Eyde Parkway and Hannah Boulevard received funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAC) Program and is forthcoming

B. Rezoning Review and Recommendation: Rockwood Development Group's request to rezone approximately 25 acres located in the East Lansing/Meridian Township 425 Agreement area

Principal Planner Oranchak summarized the Rockwood Development Group Rezoning Application Review as outlined in staff memorandum dated March 7, 2013.

Planning Commission discussion:

- Request by the Supervisor for the Planning Commission to make a recommendation
- Meridian Township does not hold a public hearing; only East Lansing does
- Zoning is currently in place for a good reason and needs a persuasive reason to be rezoned
- Primary differences between East Lansing's RM-8 and Meridian Township's RDD zoning
- Rezoning would accommodate desirable development
- No information on when the committee may meet
- Rezoning do not require a site plan or information on how the property is going to be developed
- Discussion of the aerial view of buildings on nearby properties
- Land to the south is zoned RM-8
- Inquiry as to why the RDD zoned north-south strip between the RA and the proposed RM-8 is not being rezoned
- Inquiry if the rezoning will prevent some residents from full use of their property
- Eastern end of the property does not appear developable so residents on Gossard Avenue could possibly be protected
- Impact of rezoning on the nearby roads and traffic
- RDD allows only for family housing under this 425 Agreement, while the applicant alleges it is not a viable alternative
- Planning Commission mission is to provide a recommendation to the committee
- Request for approved minutes from the East Lansing Planning Commission's public hearing on this issue

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to continue discussion at a future meeting.

9. Township Board, Planning Commission officer, committee chair, and staff comment or reports
Commissioner Deits attended a complete streets workshop in Lansing which was attended by a broad spectrum of staff in the Greater Lansing area.

10. New applications

- A. Special Use Permit #13031 (Public Works and Engineering), request to work in the 100-year floodplain to construct a pedestrian/bicycle pathway bridge over the Eberly Drain between Jo Pass Drive and the Interurban Pathway.

11. Site plans received (None)

12. Site plans approved (None)

13. Public remarks

Chair Jackson opened public remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke in support for construction of a pedestrian/bicycle pathway bridge over the Eberly Drain.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, addressed the Capstone project as it relates to "market rate" housing. He expressed appreciation for the depth of discussion from Planning Commissioners.

Chair Jackson closed public remarks.

14. Adjournment

Chair Jackson adjourned the regular meeting at 10:22 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra K. Otto
Recording Secretary

**Special Use Permit #13031
(Public Works & Engineering)
March 22, 2013**

APPLICANT: Charter Township of Meridian
Department of Public Works and Engineering
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864

STATUS OF APPLICANT: Easement holder

REQUEST: To impact the 100-year floodplain for construction of a pedestrian-bicycle pathway bridge linking Jo Pass Drive to the Interurban Pathway

CURRENT ZONING: RA (Single Family-Medium Density)

LOCATION: West of Okemos Road along the boundary between Sections 9 and 16

EXISTING AREA LAND USES: N: Interurban Pathway and undeveloped
S: Single-family Residential
E: Single-family Residential
W: Single-family Residential

CURRENT ZONING IN AREA: N: RR (Rural Residential) and RAA (Single Family-Low Density)
S: RAA (Single Family-low Density)
E: RAA (Single Family-Low Density)
W: RA (Single Family-Medium Density)

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Gail Oranchak
Gail Oranchak, AICP
Principal Planner

Richard F. Brown, Jr.
Richard F. Brown, Jr., AICP, CBSP
Associate Planner

DATE: March 22, 2013

RE: Special Use Permit #13031 (Public Works & Engineering), a request to construct a bicycle/pedestrian pathway bridge in the 100-year floodplain

The Meridian Township Department of Public Works and Engineering is requesting a special use permit for work within the 100-year floodplain (floodway fringe) associated with the construction of an approximate 35-foot long bridge with concrete abutments over the Eberly Drain. The bridge is intended to connect an existing pedestrian/bicycle pathway in the Keystone Woods planned unit development (PUD) which extends from the cul-de-sac at the end of Jo Pass Drive north to the Interurban Pathway Trail.

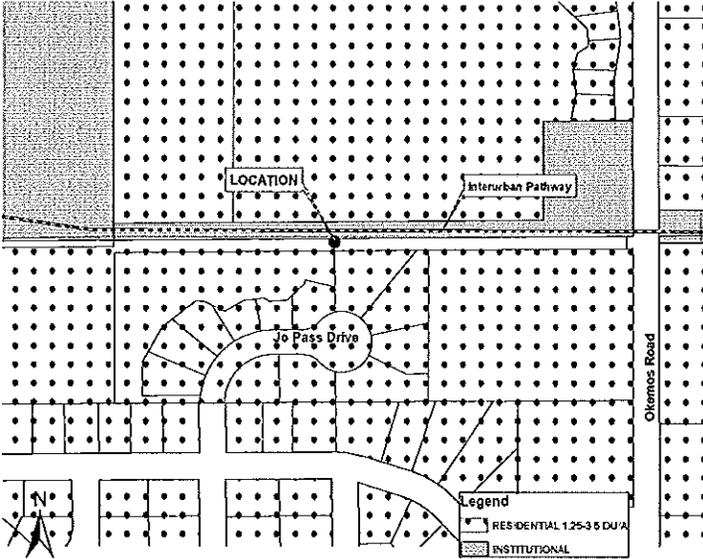
The chart below identifies the amount of impact to the floodway fringe resulting from fill and the amount of compensating cut proposed by the applicant.

ACTIVITY	FLOODWAY FRINGE
TOTAL FILL	6.92 cubic yards
TOTAL CUT	7.67 cubic yards
Cut to fill ratio	1.11:1.0

2005 Master Plan

The 2005 Master Plan's Future Land Use Map indicates the subject site is located in the Residential 1.25 to 3.5 dwelling units per acre category and the adjacent Interurban Pathway is identified as Institutional.

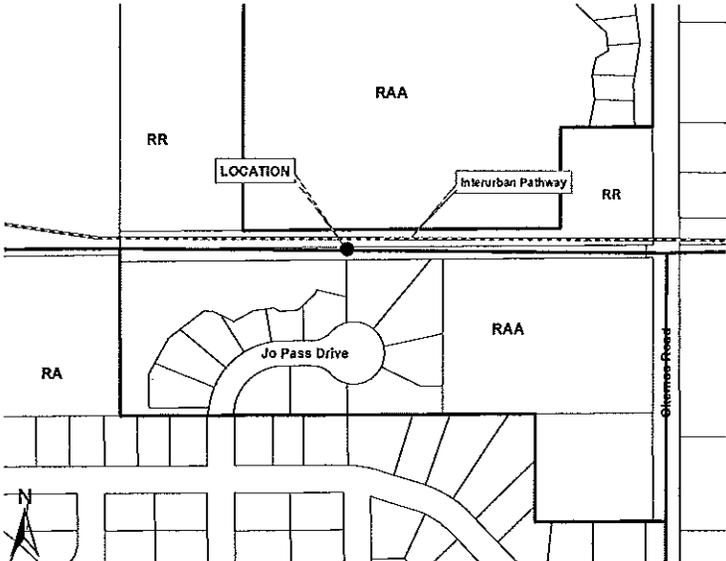
FUTURE LAND USE MAP



Zoning

The subject site of the bridge is zoned in the RA (Single Family-Medium Density) while the adjacent connection to the Interurban Pathway is zoned RR (Rural Residential).

ZONING MAP



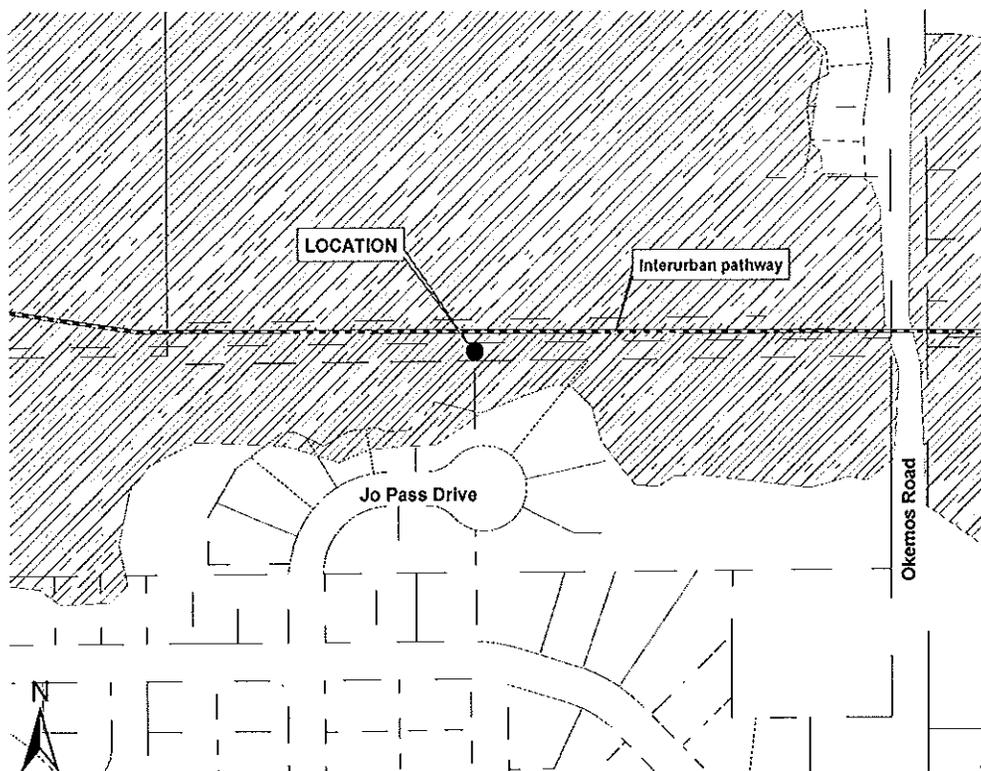
Physical Features

An existing pedestrian/bicycle pathway ends just south of the Eberly Drain. The Eberly Drain is an open county drain with a 100-foot easement and is under the jurisdiction of the Ingham County Drain Commissioner. Brushy vegetation currently occupies the majority of the subject site where the bridge is proposed.

Floodplain

According to the Township's Flood Insurance Rate Map and Study, the elevation of the 100-year floodplain on the site is 842.5 feet above mean sea level. The elevation of the proposed bridge varies between 840.5 and 842.5 feet above mean sea level.

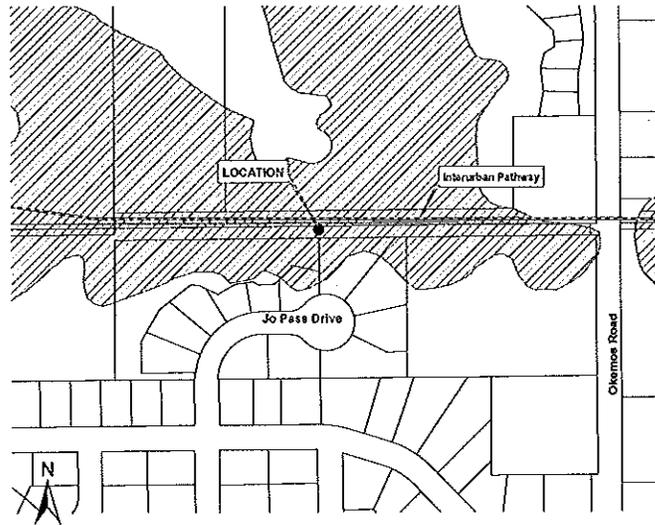
FLOODPLAIN MAP



Wetlands

The Township's Wetland Map identifies Township Wetland #16-4 along the path of the proposed bridge. Wetland #16-4, which is an open water and forested feature, occupies more than 70 total acres. A site visit by the Township's Environmental Consultant in November, 2011 found that regulated wetlands are strictly confined within the banks (near the bottom of the channel) of the Eberly Drain. Because regulated wetlands will not be impacted by the proposed bridge crossing, a wetland use permit is not required.

WETLANDS MAP



Staff Analysis

The proposed 35-foot long bridge will link a seven foot wide pedestrian/bicycle pathway, approximately 145 feet in length, extending from the cul-de-sac between 5511 and 5517 Jo Pass Drive to the south edge of the Eberly Drain, with the Interurban pathway on the opposite side of the drain. The bridge will have a gradual 1.0:17.5 foot slope.

Because the bridge is of an open design, floodwaters would be allowed to pass through the structure without constricting flow. The amount of fill proposed is minimal and the applicant has offered a 1.11:1.0 cut to fill ratio in compensation, which is consistent with the minimum 1.0:1.0 requirement of the Code of Ordinances.

A 57-foot long portion of the existing pathway which is located outside the 100-year floodplain will be removed and replaced with grade adjustments to provide a safe connection to the new bridge. At this time, access to the Interurban Pathway for residents on the west side of Okemos Road is via a paved shoulder on the west side of Okemos Road or the pedestrian/bicycle pathway on the east side.

The Department of Public Works & Engineering will be responsible for all care and maintenance of the completed pedestrian/bicycle pathway and bridge from Jo Pass Drive to the Interurban Pathway, including snow removal.

The Director of Public Works & Engineering has reviewed the project and recommends approval of Special Use Permit #13031. The project to place fill in the floodway fringe to construct a pedestrian/bicycle pathway bridge connection to the Interurban Pathway is currently under review as a minor permit (Inland Lakes and Streams) at the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. A permit is also required from the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's office for work proposed within its 100-foot wide Eberly Drain easement. The Zoning Board of Appeals will be considering the applicant's variance request for work within the water features setback at its March 27, 2013, meeting.

SUP #13031 (Public Works & Engineering)
Planning Commission (3/22/13)
Page 5

The standards for review of the project are contained in Section 86-126 and Section 86-436 of the Code of Ordinances. Specific guidance for review of applications for work in the floodway fringe can be found in Section 86-436(k) through Section 86-436(m). Issues to consider when evaluating a request to work in the floodway fringe include whether the project is damaging to the public health, safety, or welfare; or whether it will impose a financial burden on the Township.

The applicant has requested the Planning Commission make a decision on the special use permit the same night as the hearing so that the project may begin as soon as possible. Before acting on the applicant's request the same night as the public hearing, the Planning Commission must first suspend Bylaw 6.4a. The following motion is provided to suspend Bylaw 6.4a:

- **MOTION** to suspend Planning Commission Bylaw 6.4a to consider Special Use Permit #13031 the same night as the public hearing.

Planning Commission Options

The Planning Commission may approve, approve with conditions, or deny Special Use Permit #13031. A resolution to approve has been provided for consideration.

Attachments

1. Resolution to approve
2. Application materials
3. Letter from the Director of Public Works & Engineering
4. Submitted plan

g:\planning\brown\sup\stsup13031.pc1.doc

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE

**Special Use Permit #13031
(Meridian Township)
Jo Pass Pathway Bridge**

RESOLUTION

At a regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, Ingham County, Michigan, held at the Meridian Municipal Building, in said Township on the 25th day of March 2013, at 7:00 p.m., Local Time.

PRESENT: _____

ABSENT: _____

The following resolution was offered by _____ and supported by _____.

WHEREAS, the Meridian Township Department of Public Works & Engineering requested a special use permit (Special Use Permit #13031) to work and provide a compensating cut in the 100-year floodplain (floodway fringe) associated with the installation of a pedestrian/bicycle pathway bridge; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on Special Use Permit #13031 at its meeting on March 25, 2013, and has reviewed the staff material forwarded under a cover memorandum dated March 22, 2013; and

WHEREAS, Section 86-436 of the Township Code of Ordinances requires a special use permit for the proposed activities impacting the 100-year floodplain; and

WHEREAS, the proposed bridge in the floodway fringe is consistent with the requirements and standards outlined in Section 86-436, the Conservancy District for the granting of a special use permit because it will not cause an increase in the flood level as the applicant is providing a 1.11:1.0 cut to fill ratio and the bridge is designed to allow floodwaters to flow through the structure; and

WHEREAS, the proposed bridge will not be adverse or damaging to the public health or safety, nor impose a financial burden on the Township; and

WHEREAS, the proposed bridge in the floodway fringe is consistent with Section 86-126 of the Code of Ordinances, the general standards for the granting of a special use permit by being harmonious with the general character of the vicinity, by not adversely affecting or being hazardous to neighboring uses, and by not having an adverse impact on the natural resources of the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Director of Public Works and Engineering approved the project, contingent on any permits or conditions required by the Township.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby approves Special Use Permit #13031 subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is subject to the plans prepared by Department of Public Works & Engineering, dated March 6, 2013, and the related materials submitted as part of Special Use Permit

**Resolution to Approve
SUP #13031 (Meridian Township)
Page 2**

#13031, subject to revisions as required.

2. The applicant shall obtain applicable permits, licenses, and approvals from the Township, Ingham County, and the State of Michigan prior to any work taking place on the site. Copies of all permits, licenses, and approvals shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Development.
3. In no case shall the impoundment capacity of the 100-year floodplain be reduced.
4. Fill placed in the floodplain as part of the project shall be protected against erosion.
5. The applicant shall properly dispose of all excess materials from the compensating cut areas to an off-site location subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.
6. The disposed materials at the off-site location shall be protected from erosion and re-seeded subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.

ADOPTED: YEAS: _____

NAYS: _____

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
) ss
COUNTY OF INGHAM)

I, the undersigned, the duly qualified Chairperson of the Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, Ingham County, Michigan, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and a complete copy of a resolution adopted at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission on the 25th day of March, 2013.

Patricia Jackson, Chair
Meridian Township Planning Commission

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
5151 MARSH ROAD, OKEMOS, MI 48864
PLANNING DIVISION PHONE: (517) 853-4560, FAX: (517) 853-4095**

SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION

Before submitting this application for review, an applicant may meet with the Director of Community Planning and Development to discuss the requirements for a special use permit and/or submit a conceptual plan for review to have preliminary technical deficiencies addressed prior to submittal of the application. If the property or land use is located in the following zoning districts RD, RC, RCC, RN then the applicant must meet with the Planning Director to discuss technical difficulties before filing a formal application.

Part I

- A. Applicant Meridian Township Engineering Dept. - Nyal Nunn
 Address of Applicant 5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos, MI 48864
 Telephone - Work 517.853.4468 Home _____ Fax 517.853.4095 Email nunn@meridian.mi.gov
 Interest in property (circle one): Owner _____ Tenant _____ Option _____ Other
 (Please attach a list of all persons with an ownership interest in the property.)
- B. Site address / location / parcel number BTWN 5511 & 5517 Jo Pass.
 Legal description (please attach if necessary) Keystone Woods Condominiums - Common Area
 Current zoning RAA
 Use for which permit is requested / project name pedestrian/bicycle bridge in flood plain
 Corresponding ordinance number 86-436
- C. Developer (if different than applicant) _____
 Address _____
 Telephone - Work _____ Home _____ Fax _____ Email _____
- D. Architect, Engineer Planner or Surveyor responsible for design of project if different from applicant:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 Telephone - Work _____ Home _____ Fax _____
- E. Acreage of all parcels in the project: Gross 0.035 Net 0.025
- F. Explain the project and development phases:
- G. Total number of:
 Existing: structures bedrooms offices parking spaces carports garages
 Proposed: structures bedrooms offices parking spaces carports garages
- H. Square footage: existing buildings proposed buildings
 Usable Floor area: existing buildings proposed buildings
- I. If employees will work on the site, state the number of full time and part time employees working per shift and hours of operation:
- J. Existing Recreation: Type _____ Acreage _____
 Proposed Recreation: Type pedestrian/bicycle bridge Acreage 0.025
 Existing Open Space: Type _____ Acreage _____
 Proposed Open Space: Type _____ Acreage _____

K.

If Multiple Housing:

Total acres of property _____

Acres in floodplain _____ Percent of total _____

Acres in wetland (not in floodplain) _____ Percent of total _____

Total dwelling units _____

Dwelling unit mix:

Number of single family detached:	for Rent _____	Condo _____
Number of duplexes:	for Rent _____	Condo _____
Number of townhouses:	for Rent _____	Condo _____
Number of garden style apartments:	for Rent _____	Condo _____
Number of other dwellings:	for Rent _____	Condo _____

L.

The following support materials must be submitted with the application:

1. Nonrefundable Fee.
2. Legal Description of the property.
3. Evidence of fee or other ownership of the property.
4. Site Plan containing the information listed in the attachment to this application.
5. Architectural sketches showing all sides and elevations of the proposed buildings or structures, including the project entrance, as they will appear upon completion. The sketches should be accompanied by material samples or a display board of the proposed exterior materials and colors.
6. A Traffic Study, prepared by a qualified traffic engineer, based on the most current edition of *Evaluating Traffic Impact Studies: A Recommended Practice for Michigan Communities*, published by the State Department of Transportation.
 - a. A traffic assessment will be required for the following:
 - 1) New special uses which could, or expansion or change of an existing special use where increase in intensity would, generate between 50 to 99 directional trips during a peak hour of traffic.
 - 2) All other special uses requiring a traffic assessment as specified in the Township Code of Ordinances, Chapter 86, Article IV, Division 2.
 - b. A traffic impact study will be required for the following:
 - 1) New special uses which would, or expansion or change of an existing special use where increase in intensity would, generate over 100 directional trips or more during a peak hour of traffic, or over 750 trips on an average day.
 - 2) All other special uses requiring a traffic assessment as specified in the Township Code of Ordinances, Chapter 86, Article IV, Division 2.
7. Natural features assessment which includes a written description of the anticipated impacts on the natural features at each phase and at project completion that contains the following:
 - a. An inventory of natural features proposed to be retained, removed, or modified. Natural features shall include, but are not limited to, wetlands, significant stands of trees or individual trees greater than 12 inches dbh, floodways, floodplains, waterbodies, identified groundwater vulnerable areas, slopes greater than 20 percent, ravines, and vegetative cover types with potential to sustain significant or endangered wildlife.
 - b. Description of the impacts on natural features.
 - c. Description of any proposed efforts to mitigate any negative impacts.

The natural features assessment may be waived by the Director of Community Planning and Development in certain circumstances.

- M. Any other information specified by the Director of Community Planning and Development which is deemed necessary to evaluate the application.
- N. In addition to the above requirements, for zoning districts, **RD, RC, RCC, RN, and CV** and **Group Housing Residential Developments** the following is required:
1. Existing and proposed contours of the property at two foot intervals based on United States Geological Survey (USGS) data.
 2. Preliminary engineering reports in accordance with the adopted Township water and sewer standards, together with a letter of review from the Township Engineer.
 3. Ten copies of a report on the intent and scope of the project including, but not limited to: Number, size, volume, and dimensions of buildings; number and size of living units; basis of calculations of floor area and density and required parking; number, size, and type of parking spaces; architectural sketches of proposed buildings.
 4. Seven copies of the project plans which the Township shall submit to local agencies for review and comments.
- O. In addition to the above requirements, a special use application in zoning district **RP** requires the following material as part of the site plan:
1. A description of the operations proposed in sufficient detail to indicate the effects of those operations in producing traffic congestion, noise, glare, air pollution, water pollution, fire hazards or safety hazards or the emission of any potentially harmful or obnoxious matter or radiation.
 2. Engineering and architectural plans for the treatment and disposal of sewerage and industrial waste tailings, or unusable by-products.
 3. Engineering and architectural plans for the handling of any excessive traffic congestion, noise, glare, air pollution, or the emission of any potentially harmful or obnoxious matter or radiation.
- P. In addition to the above requirements, a special use application for a use in the Floodway Fringe of zoning district **CV** requires the following:
1. A letter of approval from the State Department of Environmental Quality.
 2. A location map including existing topographic data at two-foot interval contours at a scale of one inch representing 100 feet.
 3. A map showing proposed grading and drainage plans including the location of all public drainage easements, the limits, extent, and elevations of the proposed fill, excavation, and occupation.
 4. A statement from the County Drain Commissioner, County Health Department, and Director of Public Works and Engineering indicating that they have reviewed and approved the proposal.
- Q. In addition to the above requirements, a special use application for a use in the Groundwater Recharge area or zoning district **CV** requires the following:
1. A location map including existing topographic data at two-foot interval contours.
 2. A map showing proposed grading and drainage plans including the location of all public drainage easements, the limits and extent of the proposed fill, excavation, and occupation.
 3. A statement from the County Drain Commissioner, County Health Department, and Director of Public Works and Engineering indicating that they have reviewed and approved the proposal.
- R. In addition to the above requirements, the Township Code of Ordinances, Article VI, should be reviewed for the following special uses: group housing residential developments, mobile home parks, nonresidential structures and uses in residential districts, planned community and regional shopping center developments, sand or gravel pits and quarries, sod farms, junk yards, sewage treatment and disposal installations, camps and clubs for outdoor sports and buildings greater than 25,000 square feet in gross floor area.

Part II

SUP REQUEST STANDARDS
Township Code of Ordinances, Section 86-126

Applications for Special Land Uses will be reviewed with the standards stated below. An application that complies with the standards stated in the Township Ordinance, conditions imposed pursuant to the Ordinance, other applicable Ordinances, and State and Federal statutes will be approved. Your responses to the questions below will assist the Planning Commission in its review of your application.

- (1) The project is consistent with the intent and purposes of this chapter.
- (2) The project is consistent with applicable land use policies contained in the Township's comprehensive development plan of current adoption.
- (3) The project is designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such a use will not change the essential character of the same area.
- (4) The project will not adversely affect or be hazardous to existing neighboring uses.
- (5) The project will not be detrimental to the economic welfare of surrounding properties or the community.
- (6) The project is adequately served by public facilities, such as existing roads, schools, stormwater drainage, public safety, public transportation, and public recreation, or that the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the proposed use shall be able to provide any such service.
- (7) The project is adequately served by public sanitation facilities if so designed. If on-site sanitation facilities for sewage disposal, potable water supply, and storm water are proposed, they shall be properly designed and capable of handling the longterm needs of the proposed project.
- (8) The project will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, and equipment and conditions of operation that will be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors.
- (9) The project will not directly or indirectly have a substantial adverse impact on the natural resources of the Township, including, but not limited to, prime agricultural soils, water recharge areas, lakes, rivers, streams, major forests, wetlands, and wildlife areas.

Part III

I (we) hereby grant permission for members of the Charter Township of Meridian's Boards and/or Commissions, Township staff member(s) and the Township's representatives or experts the right to enter onto the above described property (or as described in the attached information) in my (our) absence for the purpose of gathering information including but not limited to the taking and the use of photographs.

Yes No (Please check one)

By the signature(s) attached hereto, I (we) certify that the information provided within this application and accompanying documentation is, to the best of my (our) knowledge, true and accurate

[Signature]
Signature of Applicant

2/19/13
Date

Nyal Nunn
Type/Print Name

Fee: N/A

Received by/Date: *[Signature]* 3/6/13

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

Elizabeth Ann LeGoff Supervisor
Brett Dreyfus Clerk
Julie Brixie Treasurer
Gerald J. Richards Manager



Milton Scales Trustee
Ronald Styka Trustee
John Veenstra Trustee
Angela Wilson Trustee

February 19, 2013

Planning Commission

Re: *Jo Pass Pathway Connector*

Dear Commission Members:

The following points are in response to the Review Criteria for our SUP application:

1. Due to the small drainage area the proposed project will not affect the floodplain.
2. The project furthers the Township's goal of increasing recreation opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists.
3. The fundamental character of the surrounding area will not be changed as there are currently pedestrian facilities in place. This project will simply connect the two pathways.
4. Existing pedestrian facilities and residences surround the project area. Both of which are compatible with the proposed pedestrian path.
5. The project will not pose an economic burden on the surrounding area. In fact, studies have shown that pedestrian trails are beneficial to residential property values.
6. The area is currently served by extensive pedestrian pathways which connect East Lansing to the west, Haslett to the east, and Okemos to the south.
7. The proposed project does not require sanitation facilities.
8. The proposed project is designed to be user-friendly, the same as all of the pedestrian facilities in the Township.
9. The project will utilize a bridge structure to avoid any impact on the nearby wetlands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nyal Nunn', is written over a horizontal line.

Nyal Nunn
Meridian Township
Project Engineer
(517)853-4468 Office
(517)853-4095 Fax
(517)316-6935 Cell
nunn@meridian.mi.us

5151 MARSH ROAD, OKEMOS, MICHIGAN 48864-1198 (517) 853-4000 FAX (517) 853-4096

www.meridian.mi.us
An Equal Opportunity Employer

printed on recycled paper

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

Elizabeth Ann LeGoff Supervisor
Brett Dreyfus Clerk
Julie Brixie Treasurer
Gerald J. Richards Manager



Milton Scales Trustee
Ronald Styka Trustee
John Veenstra Trustee
Angela Wilson Trustee

March 15, 2013

Mr. Richard Brown
Community Planning & Development
Meridian Charter Township
Okemos, MI 48864-1198

**Re: Special Use Permit Application 13031
Pedestrian Bridge Crossing the Eberly Drain**

Dear Mr. Brown:

I have reviewed the construction plans for the proposed construction of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing the Eberly Drain at the east end of Jo Pass. The project will connect the Inter-Urban Pathway to the pathway and sidewalks in the Keystone subdivision. The construction will result in a fill of 2.25 cubic yards and a compensating cut of 3 cubic yards in the floodplain.

The project is feasible, and I approve the project.

Sincerely,

Raymond O. Severy, P.E., CFM
Director of Public Works & Engineering

5151 MARSH ROAD, OKEMOS, MICHIGAN 48864-1198 (517) 853-4000 FAX (517) 853-4096

www.meridian.mi.us
An Equal Opportunity Employer

printed on recycled paper

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: 
Gail Oranchak, AICP
Principal Planner

DATE: March 21, 2013

RE: Special Use Permit #13021 (Zahra), request for a religious institution at 4133 Okemos Road, Okemos

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 11, 2013 regarding the request for a special use permit for a non-residential use in a residential district. Zahra Institute, a religious institution intends to occupy an existing approximate 4,600 square foot building zoned RA (Single Family-Medium Density) and addressed as 4133 Okemos Road.

The designation of religious institution is based on a comparison of the definition of "religious institution" found in the zoning ordinance, application materials explaining the group's activities and the submitted floor plan showing the building interior being designed to accommodate worship and other activities in accordance with the religious beliefs and practices of the group occupying the facility.

In response to comments made during the public hearing, the applicant Dr. Ritha Naji, has submitted additional information about the activities of the Zahra Institute.

Planning Commission Options

The Planning Commission may approve, approve with conditions or deny the special use permit. A resolution to approve the request is attached.

Attachments

1. Resolution to approve
2. Letter from Dr. Ritha Naji dated March 18, 2013

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE

**Special Use Permit #13021
(Zahra)
4133 Okemos Road**

RESOLUTION

At a regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, Ingham County, Michigan, held at the Meridian Municipal Building, in said Township on the 25th day of March 2013, at 7:00 p.m., Local Time:

PRESENT: _____

ABSENT: _____

The following resolution was offered by _____ and supported by _____.

WHEREAS, Zahra Institute requested a special use permit (Special Use Permit #13021) to locate a non-residential use in an approximately 4,600 square foot building zoned RA (Single Family-Medium Density) residential and located at 4133 Okemos Road; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing for Special Use Permit #13021 at its March 11, 2013 meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission reviewed and discussed staff material forwarded under cover memorandums dated March 7, 2013 and March 21, 2013; and

WHEREAS, the proposed use meets all the locational and development standards for a non-residential use in a residential district listed in Section 86-564 (e) and Section 86-564 (f) if the Code of Ordinances; and

WHEREAS, the proposed religious institution is consistent with Section 86-126 of the Code of Ordinances, the general standards for the granting of a special use permit by being harmonious with the non-residential character of the surrounding vicinity; and

WHEREAS, the proposed religious institution will not adversely affect or be hazardous to nearby residential uses; and

WHEREAS, the proposed religious institution will not be detrimental to the economic welfare of surrounding properties or the Township; and

WHEREAS, occupancy of 4133 Okemos Road by a religious institution will result in the use of a long vacant building; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby approves Special Use Permit #13021 subject to the following conditions:

**Resolution to Approve
SUP #13021 (Zahra)
Page 2**

1. Approval is based on the submitted application materials and the site plan and floor plans prepared by Liz Harrow, Architect dated received February 18, 2013, subject to revisions as required.
2. The applicant shall obtain all applicable permits, licenses, and approvals from the Township prior to any work taking place on the site. Copies of all permits, licenses, and approvals shall be submitted to the Department of Community Planning and Development.
3. The final site plan and landscape plan are subject to the approval of the Director of Community Planning and Development.
4. Any modification to the site to enlarge the use will require a modification of the special use permit.

ADOPTED: YEAS: _____

NAYS: _____

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
) ss
COUNTY OF INGHAM)

I, the undersigned, the duly qualified Chairperson of the Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, Ingham County, Michigan, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and a complete copy of a resolution adopted at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission on the 25th day of March, 2013.

Patricia Jackson, Chair
Meridian Township Planning Commission

March 18, 2013

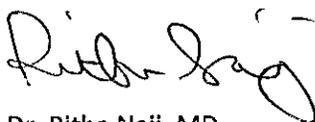
To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Dr. Ritha Najji, MD and I am representing Zahra Institute, a non-profit 501(3)(c) organization. Our organization is intending to establish a religious institution at the 4133 Okemos Rd. address. As requests for clarification have arisen regarding the nature of our proposed establishment, I would like to further explain our intended proposal.

Islam, like many faiths is comprised of many different schools of thought or denominations. As it were, our group's denomination does not currently have a facility in the area which has been established to serve as a house of worship for our needs. We would like to establish our proposed religious institution so we may have a facility where we can gather during our religious holidays, commemorate our significant religious events (celebration of births of our prophets and saints, etc.), and congregate to pray and offer group supplication together on occasions specific to our denomination. We would also tremendously value having an institution where we can gather together with friends of the local community to educate ourselves more about our religion through lectures and sermons on an informal basis and free from political influence. We refrained terming our proposed establishment a "mosque" as we do not intend to hold scheduled prayer services day in and day out, nor do we intend to have a designated religious pastor.

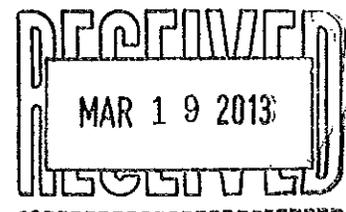
I hope the above mentioned description along with our previously submitted proposals has helped to clarify the purpose of establishing our religious institution. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information or if there are any other questions I can answer.

Sincerely,



Dr. Ritha Najji, MD

Zahra Insititute 501(3)(c)



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: 
Gail Oranchak
Principal Planner

DATE: March 21, 2013

RE: Rezoning #13010 (Planning Commission), rezone 5691 Babbitt Street from C-2 (Commercial) to RB (Single Family-High Density)

The Planning Commission held the public hearing regarding the rezoning of approximately 0.227 acres located at 5691 Babbitt Street from C-2 (Commercial) to RB (Single Family-High Density) on March 11, 2013. Comments made at the hearing were in support of the proposed rezoning.

Planning Commission Options

The Planning Commission may recommend approval of the proposed rezoning to RB (Single Family-High Density) as requested, revise the proposed rezoning, or recommend no change. A resolution to recommend approval is attached.

Attachment

1. Resolution to approve

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE

**Rezoning #13010
Planning Commission
5691 Babbitt Street**

RESOLUTION

At a regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Meridian, Ingham County, Michigan, held at the Meridian Municipal Building, in said Township on the 25th day of March 2013, at 7:00 p.m., Local Time.

PRESENT: _____

ABSENT: _____

The following resolution was offered by _____ and supported by _____.

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission initiated a rezoning of approximately .227 acres located on the west side of Babbitt Street south of Haslett Road addressed as 5691 Babbitt Street from C-2 (Commercial) to RB (Single Family-High Density); and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the rezoning at its March 11, 2013 meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, at its meeting on March 11, 2013, reviewed staff material provided under cover memorandum dated March 7, 2013 and discussed the proposed rezoning to RB (Single Family-High Density) residential); and

WHEREAS, the proposed RB (Single Family-High Density) zoning is consistent with the subject site's designation for Residential 1.25-3.5 dwelling units per acre on the Future Land Use Map of the 2005 Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the proposed RB (Single Family-High Density) zoning is consistent with existing RB zoned land located east and south of the subject site; and

WHEREAS, Township records show the house at 5691 Babbitt Street was constructed in 1929 and has been used for residential purposes since that date; and

Whereas, the site is served by public utilities and services and the proposed rezoning will not result in adverse impacts to traffic, utility systems, or the ability of the Township to provide other services; and

WHEREAS, the rezoning will result in a logical and orderly development pattern for the site and surrounding area into the future.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN hereby recommends approval of Rezoning #13010 to rezone 5691 Babbitt Street from C-2 (Commercial) to RB (Single Family-High Density) residential.

**Resolution to Approve
Rezoning #13010 (Planning Commission)
Page 2**

ADOPTED: YEAS: _____

NAYS: _____

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
) ss
COUNTY OF INGHAM)

I, the undersigned, the duly qualified and acting Chair of the Planning Commission of the Township of Meridian, Ingham County, Michigan, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and a complete copy of a resolution adopted at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission on the 25th day of March 2013.

Patricia Jackson
Planning Commission Chair

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: 
Gail Oranchak, AICP
Principal Planner

DATE: March 21, 2013

RE: Master Plan Objective: Redevelopment Readiness

Recently, the Planning Commission received a copy of the Redevelopment Ready Communities Best Practices and staff provided a brief overview of the Redevelopment Ready Communities program being promoted by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The purpose of the program is to assist communities to become more attractive for redevelopment opportunities by evaluating and updating processes to make them more "deliberate, fair and consistent."

It has been suggested, that prior to the Township actually submitting an application to participate in the program, some of the items listed in the Best Practices document could be accomplished. Thus, at the request of the Planning Commission Chair and Vice-chair and for discussion purposes, staff has prepared the attached draft objective titled "Prepare a Redevelopment Strategy Plan" to add to the Goals and Objectives section of the 2005 Master Plan without identifying the specific Goal under which this objective should be located. It incorporates items from Best Practices' Sections 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1.

Last year the Planning Commission transmitted its approved amendment to the 2005 Master Plan Goals and Objectives to the Township Board. After receiving the document, the Board requested the Planning Commission incorporate a statement on Energy Conservation into the Goals and Objectives. The Planning Commission complied with the request and transmitted its recommendation to the Board. Attached is the updated Goals and Objectives including the Energy Conservation component. The Board has yet to comment on the energy conservation objective.

Attachments

1. Objective: Prepare a Redevelopment Strategy Plan
2. Redevelopment Ready Communities Best Practices
3. Planning Commission Approved Goals and Objectives

2005 MASTER PLAN

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL ?:

Objective ?: Prepare a Redevelopment Strategy Plan

Strategies:

1. Establish criteria for selecting priority redevelopment sites
2. Identify priority redevelopment sites, neighborhoods and/or districts in the Plan show them on the Future Land Use Map
 - a. Expand public participation practices to consult with interested or affected stakeholders
 - b. Recruit businesses, residents, community groups, elected and appointed community officials to actively participate
 - c. Investigate pro-active information sharing practices
3. Establish a problem statement and goals for each priority site, neighborhood or district
4. Establish a 2-5 year timeline that identifies leadership and outreach, economic development, and planning and zoning benchmarks for each site, neighborhood or district
5. Prepare annual reports to the Township Board demonstrating attempts to hit the stated benchmarks
6. Update the zoning ordinance to facilitate redevelopment of prioritized redevelopment areas by eliminating inflexible or obsolete zoning regulations and encourage desired development types.



redevelopment ready
communities®

Redevelopment Ready Communities®

Best Practices

Program Overview

Redevelopment Ready Communities[®] (RRC) is a state-wide program that certifies communities who actively engage stakeholders to vision and plan for the future.

An RRC certification signals to business owners, developers and investors that the community has removed development barriers by building deliberate, fair and consistent processes. Certified Redevelopment Ready Communities[®] attract investment to create thriving places where people want to live, work and play.

Developed by experts in the public and private sector, the RRC Best Practices are the standard for evaluation. Each best practice addresses key elements of community and economic development, nurturing the potential of a community to meet the unique needs of businesses and residents.

Evaluations are conducted by the RRC team through interviews, observation and data analysis. After the evaluation, a community is presented with a report of findings and strategies to implement. To be awarded certification, a community must demonstrate all of the RRC Best Practice components have been met. Once a community is certified, RRC will assist in the promotion and marketing of up to three Redevelopment Ready Sites through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. These top sites are primed for new investment because they are located within a community that has effective policies, efficient processes and broad community support.



Table of Contents

Best Practice One: <i>Community Plans & Public Outreach</i>	
1.1 – The Plans	4
1.2 – Public Participation	7
Best Practice Two: <i>Zoning Policy and Regulations</i>	
2.1 – Zoning Regulations	8
Best Practice Three: <i>Development Review Process</i>	
3.1 – Site Plan Review Policy	10
3.2 – Site Plan Review Process	12
Best Practice Four: <i>Education and Training</i>	
4.1 – Training for Elected Officials, Board Members, and Staff	14
4.2 – Recruitment and Orientation	15
Best Practice Five: <i>Redevelopment Ready Sites</i>	
5.1 – Redevelopment Ready Sites	16
Best Practice Six: <i>Community Prosperity</i>	
6.1 – Economic Strategies	18
6.2 – Marketing and Promotion	19

Looking for more info?

Some parts of the Best Practices have further explanation. If a word is in blue, hover your mouse over it and a yellow box will appear for more information.

If you still have questions, feel free to contact the RRC team at RRC@michigan.org.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The governing body has adopted a corridor improvement plan, if applicable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The corridor improvement plan has established boundaries of the development area. • The corridor improvement plan identifies existing improvements in the development area to be demolished, repaired, or altered, and includes estimated costs of the improvements and timeline for completion. • The corridor improvement plan identifies any portions of the development area to be left as open space. • The corridor improvement plan considers pedestrian and/or transit oriented development. • The corridor improvement plan includes mixed-use elements. • The corridor improvement plan coordinates with the master plan, redevelopment strategy/plan and capital improvement plan. • The <u>Corridor Improvement Authority</u> plan coordinates, if applicable. • The corridor improvement plan is accessible online.

Best Practice One: Community Plans & Public Outreach

1.1 – The Plans

This best practice evaluates community planning for redevelopment and how the redevelopment vision is embedded in the master plan.

The comprehensive master plan is a community's guiding framework for growth. The information and concepts presented in the master plan are intended to serve as a policy guide for local decisions about the physical, social, economic and environmental development of the community. The plan is updated every five years to provide a community with a current and relevant decision making tool. An updated comprehensive master plan is essential to articulating the types of development the community desires and the specific areas where the community will concentrate resources.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The governing body has adopted a master plan in the past five years or has a master plan update in development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>master plan</u> reflects the community's desired direction for the future. • The master plan update has a completion timeline in place, if applicable. • The master plan is accessible online.
<p>The master plan identifies a strategy for redevelopment or a redevelopment plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The redevelopment strategy/plan identifies priority redevelopment sites, neighborhoods and/or districts. • The redevelopment strategy/plan contains problem statements and goals for redevelopment sites, neighborhoods and/or districts. • The redevelopment strategy/plan specifies implementation strategies and tools to accomplish the stated goals and actions. • The redevelopment strategy/plan includes a 2-5 year timeline that identifies leadership and outreach, economic development, and planning and zoning benchmarks. • The community demonstrates it has attempted to hit the stated benchmarks and annually reports to the governing body on its progress.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The governing body has adopted a capital improvement plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The capital improvement plan</u> has a six-year minimum projection and is reviewed annually. • The capital improvement plan identifies current utility capabilities and considers if current infrastructure allows for development that has been identified in the redevelopment strategies. • The capital improvement plan considers the coordination of projects in the same area to minimize construction costs and impacts. • The capital improvement plan coordinates with the master plan and redevelopment strategy/plan. • The capital improvement plan coordinates with the budget approved by the governing body. • The capital improvement plan is accessible online.
<p>The governing body has adopted a downtown development plan, if applicable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The downtown development plan has established boundaries of the development area. • The downtown development plan identifies existing improvements in the development area to be demolished, repaired, or altered, and includes estimated costs of the improvements and a timeline for completion. • The downtown development plan identifies any portions of the development area to be left as open space. • The downtown development plan considers pedestrian and/or transit oriented development. • The downtown development plan includes mixed-use elements. • The downtown development plan coordinates with the master plan, redevelopment strategy/plan and capital improvement plan. • The <u>Downtown Development Authority</u> plan coordinates, if applicable. • The downtown development plan is accessible online.

1.2 – Public Participation

This best practice assesses how well the community identifies its stakeholders and engages them, not only during the master planning process, but on a continual basis.

Public participation is the process by which a community consults with interested or affected stakeholders before making a decision. It is two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the objective of being intentionally inclusive, and the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions. Public participation aims to prevent or minimize disputes by creating a process for resolving issues before they become an obstacle.

The best master plans have the support of many stakeholders from businesses, residents, community groups and elected and appointed community officials. Public engagement should be more frequent and interactive than soliciting input only during the master plan update.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations		
<p>The community has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders in land use decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan identifies key stakeholders, including those not normally at the visioning table. • The plan describes public participation methods and the appropriate venue to use each method. • If a third party is consulted, they adhere to the public participation plan. 		
<p>The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond the basic methods.</p>	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><u>Basic Methods</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Notice Act ○ Newspaper posting ○ Website posting ○ Flier posting on community hall door ○ Announcements at governing body meeting ○ Post card mailings ○ Attachments to water bills ○ Local cable notification </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><u>Proactive Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual mailings ○ Charrettes ○ One-on-one interviews ○ Canvassing ○ Community workshops ○ Focus groups ○ Social networking ○ Crowdsourcing </td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community tracks success of various methods. 	<p><u>Basic Methods</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Notice Act ○ Newspaper posting ○ Website posting ○ Flier posting on community hall door ○ Announcements at governing body meeting ○ Post card mailings ○ Attachments to water bills ○ Local cable notification 	<p><u>Proactive Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual mailings ○ Charrettes ○ One-on-one interviews ○ Canvassing ○ Community workshops ○ Focus groups ○ Social networking ○ Crowdsourcing
<p><u>Basic Methods</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public Notice Act ○ Newspaper posting ○ Website posting ○ Flier posting on community hall door ○ Announcements at governing body meeting ○ Post card mailings ○ Attachments to water bills ○ Local cable notification 	<p><u>Proactive Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual mailings ○ Charrettes ○ One-on-one interviews ○ Canvassing ○ Community workshops ○ Focus groups ○ Social networking ○ Crowdsourcing 		
<p>The community shares outcomes of all public participation processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community participation results are communicated in a consistent and transparent manner. 		

Best Practice Two: Zoning Policy and Regulations

2.1 – Zoning Regulations

This best practice evaluates a community's zoning ordinance and how well the ordinance regulates for the goals of the master plan.

Zoning is a key tool to implement comprehensive and development plans in a community. Inflexible or obsolete zoning regulations can discourage redevelopment. Outdated regulations force developers to pursue rezoning or variance requests, disturbing project timelines, increasing costs, and creating uncertainty. Communities should look to streamline ordinances and regulate for the kind of development that is truly desired. In addition, zoning is an essential tool for shaping inviting walkable communities.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that reflects the goals of the current master plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ordinance is easy to understand and articulates clear definitions. • The zoning ordinance is accessible online.
The zoning ordinance contains priority districts where zoning encourages the type and form of development desired.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community allows mixed-use in priority districts by right. • The community has considered a form-based code in priority districts. • Downtown or commercial districts consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build to lines ○ Open store fronts ○ Outdoor dining ○ Ground floor signage standards ○ Increased density ○ Pedestrian friendly elements • Industrial districts permit more flexible uses that reflect new economy type businesses.
The zoning ordinance contains flexible zoning techniques that promote infill redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ordinance identifies specific allowable locations for Planned Unit Development(s) and prohibits the waiver or weakening of environmental or design standards. • Conditional land-use and conditional zoning approval requirements are clearly defined. • The community responds to project requests in a consistent manner. • The community encourages mixed- use redevelopment.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The zoning ordinance allows for a variety of housing options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ordinance identifies a variety of neighborhood classifications. • The community has considered allowing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mixed density residential ○ Residential uses in the downtown, if applicable ○ Live/work units ○ Mixed-income housing height bonus
<p>The zoning ordinance includes elements for improved non-motorized safety and access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community has considered a pedestrian and/or transit oriented development district(s). • The community has considered requiring bicycle parking spaces. • The ordinance describes minimum sidewalk width and street lighting requirements. • The ordinance describes streetscape and traffic calming requirements.
<p>The zoning ordinance allows for more flexible parking requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ordinance considers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The availability of on-street parking ○ Requiring less impervious parking spaces ○ Allowing for interconnected vehicle passage between lots ○ Allowing shared parking agreements • The community has considered implementing alternative <u>parking management strategies</u>.

Best Practice Three: Development Review Process

3.1 – Site Plan Review Policy

This best practice evaluates the community's site plan review policies, project tracking and availability of development information.

Streamlined, well-documented site plan policies ensure a smooth and predictable experience when working with a community. Unnecessary steps and layers or unclear instructions increase time and expenses associated with development. Community leaders should look to simplify and clarify policies, operate in a transparent manner and increase efficiency to create an inviting redevelopment climate that is vital to attracting investment.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The zoning ordinance is updated by staff and approved by the governing body. • The zoning ordinance is accessible online.
The zoning ordinance documents the responsibilities of the governing body, community staff, zoning board of appeals, planning commission and other reviewing bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The zoning ordinance is updated by staff and approved by the governing body. • Responsibilities are included in <u>orientation packets</u> for new employees, governing body and other reviewing body members.
The community has a method to track development projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community demonstrates they have and use a tracking mechanism for development projects.
The community annually reviews the fee schedule.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fee schedule is updated to cover the community's true cost to provide services.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>A "Guide to Development" is maintained online that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guide includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relevant contact information ○ Relevant meeting schedules ○ <u>Easy to follow step-by-step flowchart of development processes</u> ○ <u>Clear approval timelines for reviewing bodies</u> ○ Conceptual meeting procedures ○ Relevant ordinances to review prior to site plan submission ○ <u>Site plan review requirements and application</u> ○ <u>Rezoning request process and application</u> ○ <u>Variance request process and application</u> ○ <u>Special land use request process and application</u> ○ Schedule of fees for variance, rezoning, special use, etc. ○ Special meeting procedures ○ Financial assistance tools ○ <u>Design guidelines and related processes, if applicable</u> ○ Clear explanation for site plans that can be reviewed and approved administratively, if applicable ○ Permit requirements and applications ○ Instructions for online forms ○ Online payment option, if applicable

3.2 – Site Plan Review Procedures

This best practice evaluates the community’s site plan review procedures and internal/external communication.

The purpose of the site plan review process is to assure plans for specific types of development comply with local ordinances and are consistent with the master plan. Site plan review procedures and review timelines should be communicated in a clear and concise manner to prospective developers and business owners. To do this sound internal procedures need to be in place and followed. Offering conceptual site plan review meetings is one more step a community can take to show investors they are working to remove redevelopment barriers and cut down on unexpected time delays.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The community has a qualified intake professional or project manager.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community identifies a project point person and trains staff to perform intake responsibilities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Receiving and processing applications and site plans ○ Maintaining contact with the applicant ○ Facilitating meetings ○ Processing applications after approval • The designated person displays excellent customer service.
<p>The community has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review process articulates clear roles and responsibilities for the internal staff review. This may include consultants, if applicable.
<p>The community defines and offers <u>conceptual site plan review</u> meetings for applicants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community has clearly defined expectations posted online and an internal requirements <u>checklist</u> to be reviewed at conceptual meetings.
<p>The community encourages a developer to seek input from neighboring residents and businesses at the onset of the application process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community assists the developer in soliciting input on a proposal before site plan approval.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan team reviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The joint site plan team review consists of the following representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning Department ○ Economic Development ○ Department of Public Works ○ Building Department ○ Transportation Department ○ Fire ○ Police ○ Community Manager or Supervisor ○ County, if applicable
<p>The community promptly acts on special land use, variance or rezoning requests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community follows its documented procedures and timelines.
<p>The community annually reviews the successes and challenges with the site plan review procedures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site plan review team meets to capture lessons learned and amend the process accordingly. • The community obtains customer feedback on the site plan approval process and integrates changes to the process where applicable.

4.1 – Training for Elected Officials, Board Members, and Staff

This best practice assesses how a community encourages training and tracks training needs for appointed or elected officials, board members and staff.

Planning commissioners, zoning board of appeals members, the governing body and staff make more informed decisions about redevelopment and financial incentives when they receive adequate training on land use and redevelopment issues. Turnover in officials and staff can create gaps in knowledge about key development issues, which makes ongoing training essential to the efficient functioning of a community's redevelopment processes.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community demonstrates it has a training budget allocated for elected and appointed officials including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning commission ○ Zoning board of appeals ○ Governing body ○ Other boards and commissions • Training budgets allocated for community staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning ○ Building ○ Economic development
The community identifies training needs of the governing body, boards, commissions and staff based on the stated goals in the redevelopment strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community manages a simple tracking mechanism for logging individual training needs and date of attendance.
The community encourages board and commission members to attend trainings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community consistently notifies its elected and appointed officials about training opportunities.
The planning commission, zoning board of appeals and the governing body conducts collaborative study sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community officials annually conduct review meetings about the master plan, zoning or redevelopment projects.

4.2 – Recruitment and Orientation

This best practice evaluates how a community conducts recruitment and orientation for newly appointed or elected officials and board members.

Diversity on boards and commissions can ensure a wide range of perspectives are considered when making decisions on redevelopment and financial incentives. Communities should seek desired skill sets and establish expectations prior to new officials and board members becoming active.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The community sets expectations for boards and commission positions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applications set expectations for the <u>desired skill sets</u> for an open seat and that training is an important responsibility of an official. • The board and commission applications are accessible online.
<p>The community provides orientation packets to newly appointed and elected members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>orientation packet</u> for the governing body, planning commission and zoning board of appeals includes planning, zoning and redevelopment information.

Best Practice Five: Redevelopment Ready Sites

5.1 – Redevelopment Ready Sites

This best practice assesses how a community identifies, visions and markets their priority redevelopment sites.

Identified redevelopment ready sites assist a community to stimulate the real estate market for obsolete, vacant and underutilized property. Developers look to invest in communities that have a vision for the community, and a vision for priority sites. A community which takes steps to reduce the risk of rejected (re)development proposals will entice hesitant developers to spend their time and financial resources pursuing a project in their community. To encourage redevelopment, it is essential that communities actively package and market sites prioritized for redevelopment.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The community identifies and prioritizes individual redevelopment sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community maintains an updated list of high priority sites to be redeveloped. • The community uses an internal checklist to evaluate the attributes of each identified site. • The prioritized list of redevelopment sites is accessible online.
<p>The community forms a steering committee(s) for prioritized redevelopment sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The steering committee consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community leaders ○ Property owners ○ Planning and economic development staff ○ Other key stakeholders • The steering committee creates an action plan for the visioning and information gathering of the identified priority redevelopment sites. • The steering committee creates a marketing plan for the identified priority redevelopment sites.
<p>The steering committee gathers preliminary development research for prioritized redevelopment sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Market analysis or feasibility study ○ Existing structure and previous uses report ○ Known environmental and/or contamination conditions ○ Soil conditions ○ Natural features map ○ GIS information including site location, street maps and utility locations. • The steering committee identifies community advocates for the project.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
A public visioning session is held for the prioritized redevelopment sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public visioning session(s) is conducted following the community's public participation plan. • A written vision statement, including desired development outcomes and specific development criteria is created after the visioning session(s).
Available resources for the prioritized redevelopment sites are identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community determines the level of support it will give to a project depending on what desired development outcomes and criteria are met. • The community gathers financial support from other partners for projects including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development Authorities ○ Chamber of Commerce ○ Land Bank ○ Private Funders ○ State Agencies ○ Others
A "Property Information Package" for the prioritized redevelopment site(s) is assembled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "Property Information Package" includes or identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vision statement and any specific required development criteria ○ Property survey ○ GIS information including site location and street maps ○ Water, sewer, broadband and other utility locations, capacities, and contact information ○ Property tax assessment information ○ Current or future zoning ○ Deed restrictions ○ Existing building condition report ○ Previous uses ○ Traffic studies ○ Known environmental and/or contamination conditions ○ Soil conditions and natural features map ○ Current property owner ○ Market analysis or feasibility study results ○ Demographic data, at community and block group levels ○ Available financial incentives
Prioritized redevelopment sites are actively marketed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marketing plan developed by the steering committee is followed. • The "Property Information Package(s)" are accessible online.

Best Practice Six: Community Prosperity

6.1 – Economic Development Strategy

This best practice assesses what goals and actions a community has identified to assist in strengthening its overall economic health.

Today, economic development means more than business attraction and retention. While business development is a core value, a community needs to include community development and talent in the overall equation for economic success. The goal of the economic development strategy is to provide initiatives and methods that will encourage diversity of the region’s economic base, tap into opportunities for economic expansion, and help to create a sustainable, vibrant community.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The governing body has approved an economic development strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The economic development strategy is part of the master plan or a separate document. • The economic development strategy connects to the master plan and capital improvement plan. • The economic development strategy identifies the unique economic opportunities and challenges of the community. • The economic development strategy identifies a 2-5 year timeline that includes priority economic development projects and implementation benchmarks. • The economic development strategy identifies the primary economic development tools the community is willing to use and negotiate. • The community demonstrates it has attempted to hit the stated benchmarks and annually reports on its progress. • The economic development strategy coordinates with a regional economic development strategy, if applicable. • The economic development strategy is accessible online.
<p>The governing body annually reviews the economic development strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual budget coordinates with the economic development strategy. • The community annually reports on economic development strategy benchmarks and amends the strategy as needed.

6.2 – Marketing and Promotion

This best practice assesses how a community promotes and markets itself to create community pride and increase investor confidence. It also evaluates the ease of locating pertinent planning, zoning, and economic development documents on the community's website.

Evaluation Criteria	Expectations
<p>The community has developed a marketing strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marketing strategy identifies marketing opportunities and specific strategies to attract businesses, consumers and real estate development to the community. • The marketing strategy objectives strive to create or strengthen an image for the community, heighten awareness about the community, and attract and retain businesses. • The marketing strategy includes specific approaches to market the community's prioritized redevelopment sites. • The marketing strategy is accessible online.
<p>The community has an updated, user friendly municipal website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community's website is easy to navigate and find information. • The community's redevelopment information is grouped together. • The community's website contains or links to the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Master plan and amendments ○ Capital improvement plan ○ Downtown development plan, if applicable ○ Corridor improvement plan, if applicable ○ Zoning ordinance ○ All components listed in the "Guide to Development" ○ Board and commission applications ○ Prioritized list of redevelopment sites ○ "Property Information Packages" for the identified priority redevelopment site(s) ○ Economic development strategy ○ Marketing strategy

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The fundamental statement of community values, the personal values, the values relating to government and the vision for the year 2020 provide the foundation upon which subsequent policy decisions in this Plan rests. To guide the formulation of specific policy decisions, the Planning Commission established a more detailed set of goals and objectives, and strategies for pursuing them. While recommended by the Planning Commission, many of these goals and objectives can be achieved by action of the Meridian Township Board of Trustees and other Township bodies.

The Planning Commission presents the following set of specific goals, which are derived from the statements of community values (no priority is implied):

- *Goal 1:* Preserve and strengthen residential neighborhoods.
- *Goal 2:* Preserve open space and natural areas.
- *Goal 3:* Enhance the viability of Township businesses.
- *Goal 4:* Maintain and expand a diverse park system.
- *Goal 5:* Maintain essential public services.
- *Goal 6:* Provide and Support an Efficient, Safe, and Environmentally Sensitive Multi-modal Transportation Network.
- *Goal 7:* Promote efficient and sustainable growth principles.

For each of these goals, a series of objectives is stated, and for most of the objectives, one or more strategies for achieving this objective are specified.

GOAL 1: PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Objective A: Maintain a community of desirable, attractive residential neighborhoods.

Strategies:

1. Enforce all Township Ordinances and all applicable codes as mandated by the State of Michigan.
2. Prevent inconsistent uses from encroaching into residential areas.
3. Continue to support the designation and preservation of historic neighborhoods and residences.
4. Consider designating the Towar neighborhood as a special land use area and adopt zoning specific to its needs.
5. Encourage mixed use and other compact residential choices closer to shopping, public transit and other services.

6. Ensure that the Future Land Use Map has a range of residential densities which will result in a diversity of housing that meets the needs of various income levels and household types.

Objective B: Ensure new residential developments meet high standards of visual attractiveness, health and safety, and environmental sensitivity.

Strategies:

1. Minimize erosion and the intrusion of roads, pathways, houses, and driveways into wetlands and floodplains in residential developments.
2. Continue to require the planting of trees along rights-of-way, and the replacement of trees when they are damaged, destroyed, or diseased.
3. Encourage subdivision design that enhances use of outdoor areas for recreation, community walkability and integration with public transit.
4. Lay out new residential developments to accommodate public transit, for example, by providing pedestrian connections to bus stops and by designing for curb side bus stops near entrances.
5. In all subdivisions and residential developments, encourage layouts which maintain maximum green space and/or common open space.

GOAL 2: PRESERVE OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREAS

Objective A: Adopt policies and programs that maximize the preservation of open spaces, natural areas, other undeveloped areas and agricultural land uses in the Township.

Strategies:

1. Continue to develop and implement Township policies regarding the protection of open space land and natural areas via zoning, the public purchase of land, conservation easements, and development rights, and other appropriate techniques.
2. Encourage landowners to donate natural areas or open spaces to the Township, and to place their properties under the protection of the Farmland and Open Space Preservation (Part 361) or the Conservation and Historic Preservation Easement (Part 21) of PA 451 of 1994 Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, where appropriate.
3. Encourage landowners to donate land or development rights to non-profit land trusts.
4. Continue to coordinate efforts with the Park Commission to support and promote the preservation of open space and environmentally sensitive lands in the Meridian recreation areas through donations of land with natural, open space and ecological and/or historical significance.
5. Preserve the ecological integrity of the Red Cedar River through zoning, voluntary agreements with landowners, donation of land to the Township, or the purchase of land, scenic easements, and development rights, where appropriate.

6. Consider developing a tree preservation ordinance to protect significant mature trees.

Objective B: Conserve wetlands, floodplains, and other water retention areas.

Strategies:

1. Identify all wetlands, floodplains, and other water retention areas.
2. Continue to enforce the Wetlands Ordinance.
3. Continue to communicate and coordinate with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality on activities affecting lakes, streams, and wetlands.
4. Discourage development within wetlands, floodplains, floodplain fringe areas, and water retention areas.
5. Support the Environmental Commission's educational efforts to minimize infiltration of salt, fertilizer, herbicide, and pesticide.
6. Continue to enforce ordinances restricting storm water runoff into wetlands to prevent siltation and erosion.

Objective C: Link open spaces and natural areas into a network of continuous greenways throughout the Township.

Strategies:

1. Continue to use the Greenspace Plan as a reference for determining how natural areas can be linked into continuous greenways throughout the Township.
2. Work with the Land Preservation Board and Park Commission to continue the establishment of a continuous greenway along the Red Cedar River through the identification of additional parcels of land which are important to the ecological and visual integrity of the Red Cedar River.
3. Utilize land planning methods, purchases of land and development rights, and plat, site plan, and other review processes to create and maintain continuous greenways.
4. Encourage the Environmental Commission to develop educational programs about the importance of protecting endangered animals and plants, ecosystems and other unique or sensitive natural features.

Objective D: Protect groundwater recharge areas in the Township.

Strategies:

1. Continue to develop local policies in support of regional efforts to identify all important groundwater recharge areas.
2. Encourage the development of programs to educate citizens about the importance of protecting groundwater recharge areas.
3. Develop a set of public policies to protect the important groundwater recharge areas through zoning and other appropriate land management techniques.

GOAL 3: ENHANCE THE VIABILITY OF TOWNSHIP BUSINESSES

Objective A: Upgrade commercial areas.

Strategies:

1. Update the Grand River Corridor Study by incorporating data from the Capital Area Transportation Authority's (CATA) Transportation Study.
2. Conduct a study of the Haslett Road commercial area identifying strategies to maintain its traditional character through preservation, renovation and redevelopment where appropriate. In the course of the study, address traffic and parking conditions and non-conforming mixed use issues.
3. Prepare implementation plans from recommendations in the CATA Transportation Study, Grand River Corridor Study update, and the Haslett Road Commercial Area study.
4. Encourage implementation of the Okemos DDA Integrated Plan.
5. Update the 2004 Newton Area Study to acknowledge approved land uses and evaluate opportunities for walkable urban design.
6. Encourage the use of the commercial planned unit development ordinance (C-PUD) for redevelopment of older commercial areas.
7. Encourage attractive architecture which harmonizes with the environment through innovative design and landscaping.
8. Identify specific areas where the form-based code technique may be appropriately applied and make recommendations based on the results of the study.

Objective B: Develop the Township's commercial core into a viable and vibrant district.

Strategies:

1. Initiate a study of alternative design schemes to promote walkable urbanism.
2. Conduct a market study to determine the viability of walkable urban land uses, such as upper floor rental apartments in the commercial core.
3. Conduct a visioning/charrette process to engage the public in deciding the direction for development in the commercial core.
4. Explore options for public-private partnerships to revitalize the Township's commercial core.
5. Develop the Township's center into a vibrant mixed use district, through the addition of planned or committed office and residential land uses in and adjacent to the core area.

Objective C: Improve the attractiveness of the Township's entrances and transportation corridors.

Strategies:

1. Investigate grant-based funding opportunities to improve landscaping along major thoroughfares.

2. Create a series of well-designed and attractively landscaped entrances along the main roads entering into the community.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN AND EXPAND A DIVERSE PARK SYSTEM

Objective A: Continue to expand the Meridian Township park and recreational system to meet the recreational needs of residents into the future.

Strategies:

1. Pursue acquisitions that target current and future demands of residents.
2. Employ acquisition strategies that leverage available dollars to secure maximum property for the value.
3. Support the Park Commission's efforts to link the Harris Nature Center with the Pedestrian-Bicycle Pathway system.

Objective B: Develop and support Meridian Township park development and recreation programming that is diverse, widely distributed, fiscally responsible, and represents community needs.

Strategies:

1. Support the Park Commission's continuing efforts to pursue public input in determining park and recreation improvement to meet identified needs.
2. Utilize cooperative methods of providing recreation facilities by working with local recreation associations, schools, businesses, neighborhood groups and associations to provide diverse recreation programs.
3. Increase coordination between the Land Preservation Advisory Board and Park Commission to maximize the potential benefits of open space and natural areas.
4. Encourage developers to incorporate parks and recreation amenities in new developments to complement the efforts of the Park Commission.
5. Continue to promote fiscal responsibility through partnerships and collaborative opportunities, grant support, sponsorships and donations, and encouraging volunteerism.

GOAL 5: MAINTAIN ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Objective A: Ensure that any future growth is consistent with the Township's present or planned capacity for sewage treatment, public water, and other utility systems.

Strategies:

1. Focus growth into an urban services district to ensure efficient and fiscally responsible use of public services.
2. Routinely assess the demands on the utility systems from developments to determine available capacity for future development based on demographics.

3. Routinely inventory water, sewer and other utility systems capacity.
4. Maintain and upgrade the infrastructure (water, sewers, roads, community facilities) of the Township through the Capital Improvements Program's systematic scheduling of infrastructure construction, maintenance, and renovation.
5. Continue to use Special Assessment Districts to finance infrastructure projects.
6. Incorporate appropriate recommendations from Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's Wellhead Protection Audit for regional best practices to protect the public water supply.

Objective B: Maintain police, fire, and ambulance service to all areas of the community.

Strategy:

Provide support for new fire stations or other public safety buildings, via the Capital Improvements Program.

Objective C: Maintain quality library service for the community.

Strategy:

Provide support for new library facilities based on need via the Capital Improvements Program.

Objective D: Use land use policies to assist the public school districts which are a valued community asset that makes Meridian Township a unique and desirable place to live.

Strategies:

1. Continue and/or initiate land use policies that attract families with students.
2. Support the Park Commission's agreement with the School Districts to coordinate park facilities and programs.
3. Support street and pathway improvements that provide safe access routes for school children.

Objective E: Promote cooperation between adjoining communities, school districts, and appropriate agencies in efforts to consolidate such services as libraries, schools, fire, police, public water and public sewer.

GOAL 6: PROVIDE AND SUPPORT AN EFFICIENT, SAFE, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Objective A: Evaluate the existing transportation network and identify problems, including traffic congestion, safety, environment, and aesthetics, which can be solved at acceptable cost.

Strategies:

1. Cooperate with county, regional and state entities to develop strategies to improve traffic flow.
2. Consider zoning and other design strategies such as Complete Streets as effective means of ensuring safe and efficient travel for all modes of transportation.

Objective B: Maintain local roads.

Strategies:

1. Support improvements to local streets when a special assessment district request has been received from local residents.
2. Review reconstruction and expansion of local non-subdivision streets through the Capital Improvements Program process when 50 percent of the improvement's funding will be paid for by the Township or its residents through special assessment districts.

Objective C: Develop a Complete Streets policy for all users of Township roads

Strategies:

1. Define a vision for Complete Streets program as authorized by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and appropriate to Meridian Township in collaboration with Township citizens and all other stakeholders.
2. Review current policies and procedures for compliance with this vision.
3. Identify inconsistencies in current policies and impediments to implementing a Complete Streets policy.
4. Conduct planning, regulatory and physical audits of current street designs as needed and financially feasible.
5. Coordinate the Pedestrian-Bicycle Pathway Plan with Safe Routes to School policies and other Township plans.
6. Share the Township's vision and work with the Ingham County Road Commission (ICRC), Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) and other agencies.

Objective D: Improve pedestrian and bicycle transit in the Township.

Strategies:

1. Continue to implement the requirement for sidewalks as determined necessary.
2. Continue to implement the pedestrian/bicycle pathway system through site plan review.
3. Continue to support the pedestrian/bicycle pathway millage for construction and maintenance of the Township's pedestrian/bicycle pathway system.
4. Investigate alternative surfacing materials to reduce the amount of impervious surface materials used in the construction of the pedestrian/bicycle system.

5. Continue to investigate strategies for safe and efficient travel for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Objective E: Encourage the use of public transportation

Strategies:

1. Encourage and promote public transportation service to any new developments and in conjunction with redevelopment via site plan review.
2. Institute design standards for site plan review to ensure public transportation access to all segments of the population but particularly those with physical disabilities.

Objective F: Coordinate Meridian Township's transportation planning with regional planning efforts administered by the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and recorded in the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan.

Strategies:

1. Coordinate transportation planning and road improvements for all non-local streets with the region's long range plan through continued participation in the Transportation Review Committee of the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.
2. Advocate and promote the Township's needs and interests in transportation improvements with the Ingham County Road Commission, Michigan Department of Transportation, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Capital Area Transportation Authority, and Michigan/Grand River Avenue Transportation Study.

GOAL 7: PROMOTE EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH PRACTICES

Objective A: Implement sustainable energy and environmental practices throughout the Township utilizing the most current best practices.

Strategies:

1. Budget funds to have Township buildings assessed for energy efficiency a minimum of once every five years.
2. Improve energy efficiency of Township facilities with cost-effective improvements.
3. Give preferences to higher efficiency vehicles when purchasing Township fleet vehicles.
4. For Meridian Township procurement purposes, when equivalent products or services are available, preference should be given to the more sustainable services or products.

5. Encourage street design to support efficient flow of traffic for all users (in conformance with Complete Streets) in a safe environment.
6. Evaluate and implement, if economically and technologically feasible, the purchase of renewable energy and the installation of electric vehicle charging stations for Township facilities; and encourage similar facilities elsewhere in the Township.
7. Establish a minimum level of LEED certification or the equivalent for all projects undertaken by the Township subject to compliance with State law.
8. Establish ordinances providing incentives for redevelopment that emphasizes infill development, building reuse and/or deconstruction.
9. Increase the use of alternative transportation modes for commuting and recreation by encouraging the use of mixed use planned unit developments and implementing the Greenway Plan.
10. Explore methods through ordinances or by providing incentives for existing businesses to upgrade their parking lots and landscaping to increase tree cover and shade to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Objective B: Develop Township policies to balance and manage growth.

Strategies:

1. Periodically update and implement the Master Plan.
2. Update the Zoning Ordinance and Land Division Ordinance to reflect the policies in the Master Plan.

Objective C: Maintain open spaces and natural features in suburban and rural areas of the Township.

Strategies:

1. Continue to develop zoning standards and Township policies which maintain the Township's open spaces, natural features, and rural areas.
2. Continue to encourage and support voluntary citizen land conservancy efforts which maintain the Township's open spaces, natural features, and rural areas.

Objective D: Define an urban services district to promote walkable community development and dynamic community improvement through redevelopment.

Strategies:

1. Promote land use policies that emphasize compact infill development.
2. Investigate opportunities to maximize the use of existing infrastructure through development and redevelopment within the urban services district.
3. Investigate additional strategies to provide incentives for development and redevelopment within the urban services district.

Objective E: Encourage growth in Meridian Township that leads to sustainable land use.

Strategies:

1. Involve Township residents, neighborhood associations, urban planners, attorneys and other experts in land use planning, law and policy to study new techniques for the control and management of growth.
2. Review the legality and suitability of these techniques for Meridian Township.

g:\planning\glo\2005 Master Plan\2005 Master Plan Update\Goals\Planning Commission Recommendation\Updated 3-22-13