



CITY OF NOVI CITY COUNCIL
MAY 19, 2025

SUBJECT: Final approval of Sakura East JZ23-41 with Zoning Map Amendment 18.743, to rezone from Light Industrial to Town Center One with a Planned Rezoning Overlay.

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT: Community Development, Planning

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Rezoning 3.5 acres in a transitional area near Novi Town Center.
- Activating long-vacant parcels in proximity to Sakura Novi development.
- The benefits to the public include the design and construction of a pocket park/wetland overlook on the City parcel to the west.
- The City Council tentatively approved the PRO Plan and directed the City Attorney to draft the PRO Agreement on November 25, 2024.
- The Planning Commission recommended approval of the PRO Plan on October 16, 2024.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The petitioner is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment for approximately 3.5 acres of property on the south side of Eleven Mile Road, west of Meadowbrook Road (Section 23). The applicant is proposing to rezone property from Light Industrial (I-1) to Town Center One (TC-1) using the City's Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO) option.

The Future Land Use Map identifies this vacant property and those to the west and south as Town Center Gateway. Land to the east and north of the subject property is indicated for Industrial Research Development Technology on the Future Land Use Map. The subject parcel and all parcels surrounding it are zoned Light Industrial (I-1), which reflects the historic development pattern of this area. North of the property is the City's Department of Public Works complex. To the east and northeast of the property are office buildings. The parcel to the south is owned by Verizon and has a large cell tower on it but is otherwise vacant. To the west is a large city-owned parcel with a wetland area.

The formal PRO Concept Plan proposes a 45-unit multiple-family townhome development. The single entrance to the development would be from 11 Mile Road, with an emergency only access connection to the parcel on the east. Parking is provided in garages, on the garage aprons, and in a few small bays of surface parking for guests.

The Town Center districts require development amenities to be provided, which are shown on the plans. There are three gathering spaces: one multi-purpose field, one open space area between the buildings, and one area with outdoor furniture, grill and a firepit

on the west side. The plan exceeds the requirements for both general open space and usable open space by a significant amount. There are also no impacts to the existing wetland area.

The request to rezone includes the condition to limit the use of the property to the use and number of units indicated on the site plan, which would provide restrictions, unless the agreement is amended. Additional conditions proposed include a limitation on building height and exceeding the open space requirement. The full list of proposed conditions and deviations requested is included in the draft PRO Agreement.

ITEMS TO HIGHLIGHT

Based on City Council's suggestion during the initial review on February 5, 2024, the applicant is proposing to design and construct a wetland overlook amenity on the City's wetland property as a public benefit. The concept drawing shows a crushed granite pathway from the 11 Mile Road public sidewalk to a wider area overlooking the pond with benches, accent boulders, a stone retaining wall with a guardrail, and landscaping on either the east or west side of the pond. City Council expressed an interest in having the overlook in the area east of the wetland so that in the future this could be expanded to create a larger park area. **The attached PRO Agreement allows the final location of the overlook amenity to be worked out administratively during the site plan review process, with consideration to be given to security, engineering feasibility, wetland impacts, and the EGLE wetland permit process.**

During the November 25, 2024 Council meeting, the suggestion was made to provide a mid-block non-motorized crossing to access the pathway on the north side of the road. **After further evaluation, staff does not suggest this crossing should be installed at this time due to safety concerns. If the City moves forward with an extension of Lee BeGole Drive, such a crossing could be explored at that time.**

Staff had previously requested 43-foot-wide right-of-way (halfwidth), as that was the width of the Highway Easement currently held. Council had supported this request. The applicant has argued that a 33-foot right-of-way (half-width) would be consistent with what was provided for Sakura Novi, and that the additional width would not allow sufficient room for the franchise utilities to be installed. **Additional evaluation by Staff confirms that the master planned half-width of Eleven Mile Road is 33-feet, so the PRO Agreement reflects this as the ROW dedication required.**

The applicant has revised one of the building elevations from a split-grade model to a flat grade. Both building types are now in compliance with the façade ordinance, so a deviation for a Section 9 waiver has been eliminated from the Agreement.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on the formal PRO Plan on October 16, 2024 and recommended approval to the City Council. Comments made at that time are reflected in the meeting minutes included in this packet.

PREVIOUS CITY COUNCIL ACTION

The City Council granted tentative approval of the request at the November 25, 2024 meeting, and directed the City Attorney's Office to prepare a PRO Agreement.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

The City Council is now asked to consider the actual text of the PRO Agreement and give final approval of the agreement, the PRO Plan, and the rezoning. Following Council's final approval, the applicant will submit for Site Plan approval under typical review procedures, including Planning Commission approvals.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approval of the request of Sakura Novi Residential, LLC, for Sakura East JZ23-41, with Zoning Map Amendment 18.743, to rezone property from Light Industrial (I-1) to Town Center One (TC-1), subject to the attached Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO) Agreement, the corresponding PRO Plan, the conditions of this Motion, and the conditions listed in the staff and consultant review letters, and also subject to any changes and/or conditions as discussed at the City Council meeting, with any final minor alterations required in the determination of the City Manager and City Attorney to be incorporated by the City Attorney's office prior to the execution of the final agreement.

This motion is made for the following reasons, and only upon the assumption that all conditions and requirements of this motion and the PRO Agreement, will be satisfied:

- A. The proposed neighborhood-scaled, pedestrian accessible development would be in line with the intent of the 2016 Master Plan, or a reasonable alternative thereto. Developer indicates that the proposed development complements the 2016 Master Plan vision for a unique, well designed, mixed-use facility since it acts as an extension of the Sakura Novi project under development to the west.
- B. The proposed residences will provide smaller footprint, middle-market rate residential rental offerings. The new homes would be a draw as temporary living opportunities for professionals and their families drawn to the City for work or other cultural reasons, as well as the large corporations that sponsor many of these families.
- C. The developer will create a public overlook amenity at the existing pond on the City's parcel (22-23-226-042), including a walking path from the public sidewalk. Landscaping treatments, invasive species removal, the pathway, and a seating area at the edge of the pond will "activate" the pond. These efforts will provide an attractive amenity for appreciation of the water feature within an important corner at the heart of Novi.
- D. For all of the foregoing reasons, the proposal will result in an enhancement of the project area as compared to a "straight" TC-1 designation, and will result in significant benefits to the public that would not otherwise be available with a straight rezoning TC-1, and the deviations listed in the Agreement are necessary to secure the enhancements listed above and in the PRO Agreement.
- E. The proposed Town Center One zoning district is a reasonable alternative to the Gateway East District recommended in the Future Land Use Map, and fulfills the intent of the Master Plan for Land Use, and because:

1. A reduction in traffic compared to development under the current zoning. The traffic study shows a difference of about 20 fewer trips compared to a general light industrial use, or up to 835 fewer trips compared to a medical office use.
2. The plan shows that the total open space areas to be provided will exceed the 15% Open Space requirement of the TC-1 district, with approximately 45% shown.
3. The project will exceed the 9,000 square foot Usable Open Space requirement, with about 17,200 square feet proposed.
4. Preservation of the on-site wetland. The wetland is very small in size (less than 0.1 acre) but does represent an ecological benefit.
5. A publicly accessible pond overlook amenity to be provided on the City's parcel with similar amenities as illustrated on the PRO Plan. The final location and details of the amenity will be approved administratively by staff during the site plan review process.