

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, INTERIM CITY MANAGER
FROM: JAMES HILL, PLANNER
THROUGH: BARBARA MCBETH, AICP, CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT: PROPERTY EXCHANGE – MASTER PLAN FOR LAND USE
DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 2023

At the November 14 City Council meeting, Council unanimously approved the Property Exchange Agreement by and Between the City of Novi and the Novi Community School District. A due diligence period was provided to address issues raised by the transfer of City park areas. One issue is the process for the City to follow in order to swap the park land under State Law with regard to the Master Plan's Future Land Use Map. It was determined that an amendment to the Future Land Use Map must occur to continue finalizing the exchange agreement.

The Master Plan Amendment process being followed is separate from the Master Plan Update that is currently underway. The Amendment follows a similar process to the Master Plan Update with regard to the reviews and actions by the Planning Commission and the City Council. The process provides opportunities for public hearing and comment, and distribution of the proposed map amendments to the required entities (nearby communities, regional planning bodies, utility companies, etc.) before the matter returns for final consideration approximately 45-60 days following the distribution of the proposed updates to the Future Land Use Map.

Master Plan – Proposed Amendments

Staff prepared information for the Planning Commission to consider with regard to the Future Land Use Map, identifying the areas on the map that are recommended to be modified as shown in the [Planning Commission Meeting Packet](#), and detailed below.

The City properties involved (being transferred to the School District) are:

- A portion of the City's Wildlife Woods Park adjacent Novi Middle School located near the northeast corner of Eleven Mile and Wixom Roads (about 23 acres), and
- An area at south end of the Civic Center/Ella Mae Power Park located south of Ten Mile Road and east of Taft Road, and is currently used for School athletic field purposes and open space consisting of woodlands and wetlands (about 46 acres).

The amendments propose to reclassify land being conveyed to the School District from "Public Park" as shown on the Future Land Use Map to "Educational Facility", in addition to including a statement that this land is no longer required for park purposes by the City.

The School properties involved (being transferred to the City) are:

- A small piece of land near Fuerst Park (roughly 1.77 acres) and
- Bosco Fields, at 11 Mile and Beck Roads (about 70 acres).

The amendment proposes to reclassify Bosco Fields from "Educational Facility" on the Future Land Use Map to "Public Park".

The second part to the amendment is a change to the Residential Density Map of the 2016 Master Plan. The 2016 version of this map did not attribute a residential density to the southeast corner of 10 Mile and Taft (area of the Civic Center, Novi High School, library, Ella Mae Power Park), because it is owned by the City. However, the 2016 Master Plan specifically stated that if conversion of park land were to occur, then residential uses would make sense at the density prescribed in the Residential Density Map. The proposed amendment to the Residential Density Map would show this area with a maximum density of 2.7 dwelling units per acre, which is consistent with the R-3, One Family Residential Zoning District and the surrounding residential uses to the west and south; more importantly, it's less dense than the underlying zoning of R-4, One Family Residential Zoning at this area, and the reference to the Residential Density Map in the 2016 Master Plan required a change to provide this area with a prescribed density.

Master Plan Density Discussion

Generally, the density shown on the Future Land Use Map is provided for all residentially zoned areas throughout the City. The numbers range from the least dense at 0.8 units/acre (consistent with the R-A, Residential Acreage district) to the most dense at 20 – 30 units/acre (consistent with the TC Town Center District and the planned City West District). The planned maximum density is determined at the time of the Master Plan updates, and takes into consideration the current and planned uses for a site, and any special initiatives recommended in the Master Plan, such as a new Zoning District, or if there has been a significant change in character in a particular area since the previous update to the plan.

The density number is intended as a guide for the development community and for the Planning Commission and City Council in determining whether rezoning to a higher- or lower-density residential district is recommended. Since the Master Plan seeks to project out over several years, changes to the density of residential areas often are realized gradually, if at all. Since schools and churches are often located in residential zoning districts, the maximum density that is provided for these uses on the plan may never be achieved, since schools and churches are often remain as is for many years.

Planning Commission Public Hearing

On February 8th, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the opening of the Master Plan, and received public comment. The Planning Commission considered the proposed amendments and adopted a resolution opening the Master Plan review process and forwarding the proposed amendments to the City Council for distribution.

During the public hearing, residents voiced their concerns over the change to the respective maps, questioned why Residential Density was a part of the amendment, and asked what the School District planned to do with the properties. Novi Community Schools Superintendent Ben Mainka was at the meeting and explained that no plans were established for any of the properties in the near future, except for maintenance of the land as it is currently used. He mentioned the possibility of an additional ball field being put in along with the other athletic fields south of the High School. The remainder of the property being used by the cross-country teams would continue to be used in that manner, and clarified that the property would remain open to the residents to use the

trails, similar to how the public is able to use the high school's tennis courts. Mr. Mainka emphasized that this exchange between the City and the School had been in the works for quite some time.

When this comes to Council, we will better explain to residents that the inclusion of the density language, which was the main focus of residents who spoke at the Planning Commission and expressed objection to the possible "development" of the property for single-family homes, has nothing to do with any actual development of the property, as noted by the Superintendent. Again, there is an underlying residential zoning that applies (R-3) and the only purpose of even referring to "density" was to address the reference to the 2016 Residential Density Map Master Plan that required a change to provide this area with a prescribed density if it's no longer reserved for City parkland.

Next Steps

At an upcoming meeting, the City Council will be asked to authorize the distribution of the amendment to the required entities as provided for in the state law. At the meeting, Council may decide whether to leave the final adoption of the plan amendments with the Planning Commission, following another public hearing, or request that the matter will return to the City Council for final adoption.