

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF ORION  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF ORION PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2021 - 6:00 PM  
ORION COMMUNITY CENTER  
1335 JOSLYN ROAD  
LAKE ORION, MI 48360**

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The Charter Township of Orion Planning Commission will be held in-person at the above address.

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- |                                          |   |
|------------------------------------------|---|
| 1. OPEN MEETING                          | 2 |
| 2. ROLL CALL                             |   |
| 3. AGENDA REVIEW AND APPROVAL            |   |
| 4. NEW/UNFINISHED BUSINESS               |   |
| A. PC-2021-07, 5 Year Master Plan Update | 3 |
| 5. ADJOURNMENT                           |   |

*In the spirit of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with a disability should feel free to contact Penny S. Shults, Clerk, at (248) 391-0304, ext. 4001, at least seventy-two hours in advance of the meeting to request accommodations.*

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF ORION PLANNING COMMISSION**

**\* \* \* \* \* A G E N D A \* \* \* \* \***

**PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP, WEDNESDAY,**

**JULY 21, 2021 at 6:00 P.M.**

**1335 JOSLYN RD., LAKE ORION, MI 48360**

**The Charter Township of Orion Planning Commission Workshop will be held in-person at the above address.**

**1. OPEN MEETING**

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**3. AGENDA REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

**4. NEW/UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. PC-2021-07, 5 Year Master Plan Update

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

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JUL 14 2021

Orion Township  
Planning & Zoning

# Public Input Summary



# Leadership Advance Summary

On Tuesday, February 9, 2021, the Giffels Webster planning team met with sixteen Orion Township staff members and stakeholders from various departments to gather their input on the township's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Participants were asked what they saw as the township's top three strengths and weaknesses. The results of that exercise are provided in the following pages. Information is compiled using Infogram.

## Strengths

### PARKS RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE (28)

Parks

Recreation

Safety paths

Close to recreational opportunities

Parks/trees nature



Above: Staff wrote strengths on green sticky notes, which were collected and organized into like categories

### GOVERNMENT (6)

Fiscally responsible

On TV

Chamber

Great Staff

Police and Fire

Reliable Infrastructure

### SCHOOLS (9)

Good School system

Education

### COMMUNITY (8)

Volunteer opportunities

Collaboration with government

Sense of community

Nice community & people

### LOCATION (6)

Freeway access

Close to I-75

Near city amenities





# Weaknesses

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY (12)

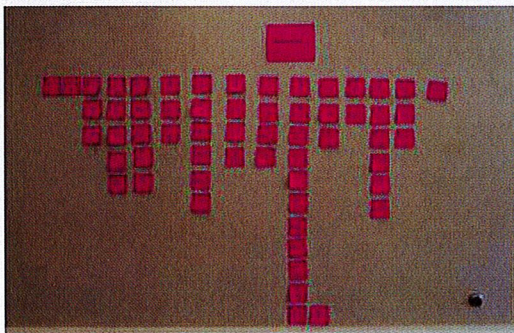
Congestion  
Road condition  
Gravel/dirts roads  
No Pedestrian connectivity  
No Mass transit

## RECREATION (5)

No adult sports beer leagues  
No Volleyball  
No lake access  
No rec center (youth)  
No basketball courts

## HOUSING (6)

Lack of multiple-family  
Affordability  
Needs /housing for lake access



Below: Staff wrote weaknesses on pink sticky notes, which were collected and organized into like categories.



## LACK OF SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES (8)

Not enough future business  
Unknown to big developers  
Too small  
Lacks shopping  
Lacks destination  
Grocery shopping options

## LAND USE (6)

Urban/City mix  
No downtown  
Ugly Industrial  
Land Fill  
No Business Center  
Historic Suburban dev. Style

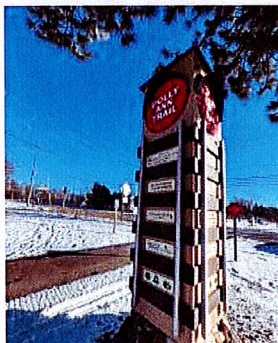


## Opportunities and Threats

After the strengths and weaknesses were discussed, staff were asked to discuss, in small groups of 4-5, what they perceived as the best opportunities and biggest threats to a better future for the township. Each group shared their answers, which are listed below:

### Opportunities

- Enhancing trails / open space
- Long term recreation millage
- Keeping state lands in control
- Environmentally responsible
- Master Plan Process
- Craft updated zoning to implement Master Plan
- Schools offering trades training
- Safe crossing for pathway system
- Youth/talent retention
- Provide affordable Housing
- Gingellville Overlay
- Pocket parks/walkability
- Mixed use development
- More restaurants
- Updating the Master Plan
- Educating citizens about development process
- Education for boards and commission
- Work with Village of Lake Orion
- Involved businesses in planning process
- Existing business spaces are available (vacancy)



Left: Support and possible expansion of the regional trail system was seen as an opportunity

Right: Phragmites reeds are an example of an invasive species that if not mitigated can pose environmental and engineering challenges

### Threats

- Lawsuits (land use)
- Village/Twp. governments with different views
- Separate Police Depts.
- Invasive species
- Overtaxing
- Overbuilding/development
- Overcrowded lakes
- Declining population
- Negative perception of rental housing
- Maintain relationship with chamber
- Impact of online business to brick and mortar
- Change in social trends (rural being less attractive)
- Lack of employees to fill available jobs
- Aging population demand for community services
- Lack of population growth
- Consent judgments
- Fences
- Road conditions
- Drainage - residential areas
- Sewage and sanitary capacity

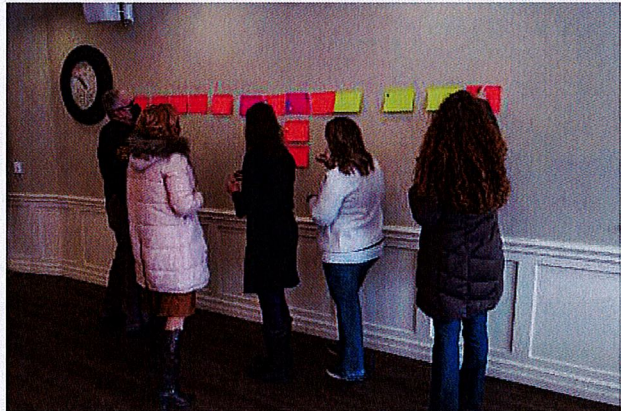




## Emerging Trends

Finally, staff were asked to write what emerging trends they thought should be explored as part of the master plan update process. They were asked to write down their favorite "trend" on a large sticky note, which were then all posted on the wall. Each staff member was then given six "votes"(dots) and were asked to vote for their favorite idea. All results were tallied and are shown in the table below:

Trends	Votes (Dots)
Green Infrastructure	4
Outbuilding Size	1
Using technology for safety	6
Safety Paths	4
Regional Connectivity	5
Live - work - play	2
Variety of housing	5
Sustainability (green space, cluster housing)	4
Establish Destination	18
Wakability + transit system	8
10 Minute neighborhood	8
How to attract talent?	5
Outdoor seating	2
Outdoor socialization	9
Diversified Housing Types / styles	11
Work from home	-



The highest vote topic relates to establishing a destination or place that is clearly identifiable in the township. The 10 minute neighborhood comment is similar in that it speaks to creating walkable residential neighborhoods with a core area that provides local goods and services, all of which are accessible within a 10 minute walk. Walkability, outdoor socialization, safety paths, and live-work-play are also related topics that support the destination and 10 minute neighborhood concepts.



# Public Input Summary

## Open House

The township hosted a hybrid open house which included an in-person event at the Orion Center on June 16th, which is followed by a four-day virtual open house. Both platforms included the same information and allowed participants to engage with information about the community and provide input on several prompts. Input is gathered on major topics as listed below

- Demographics and local economy
- Sustainability and natural features
- Land use (existing, future, and developments)
- Complete streets (roads and sidewalks)
- Housing (single-family, multi-family, and rural character)
- 15-minute neighborhoods: village and hamlets

### Encourage Industries



Education

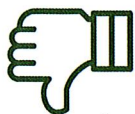


Healthcare

## Township Now | Demographics, Economy & Sustainability

The feedback included a strong support for requiring developers to preserve more trees and to pay into a tree fund to install trees elsewhere within the township (along roads or within parks).

Majority of the respondents considered wetland and woodland preservation very important. The feedback was split between 'neutral' and 'very important' when asked about low-impact storm water management practices. Residents recommended that the township should pursue healthcare and educational industries and increasing employment opportunities.



### Discourage land uses

- Heavy industrial
- Woodland removal
- Large lot residential uses
- Conversion of residential to non-residential uses

## Land Use | Existing, Future & Developments

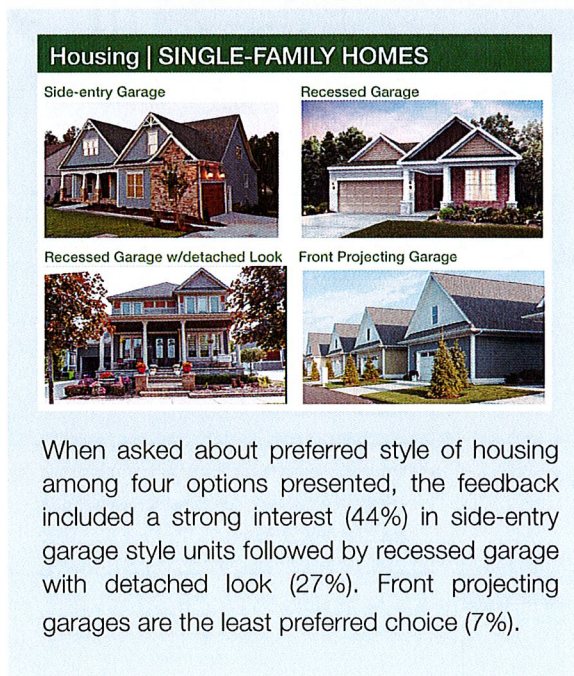
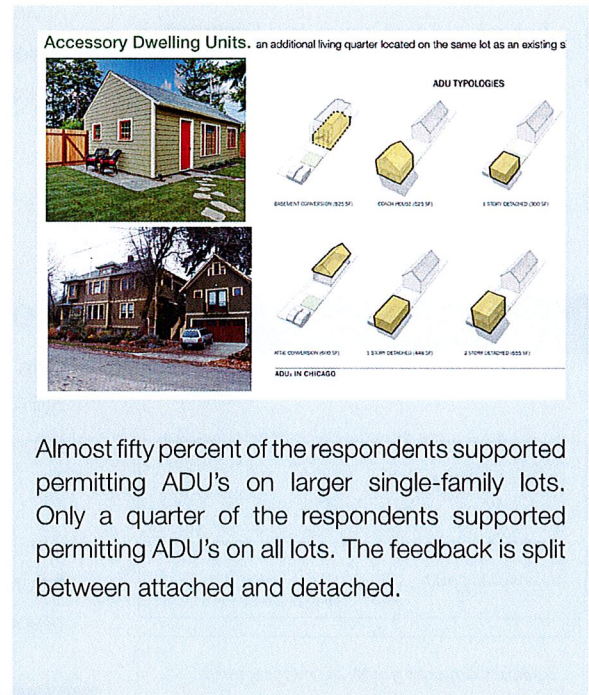
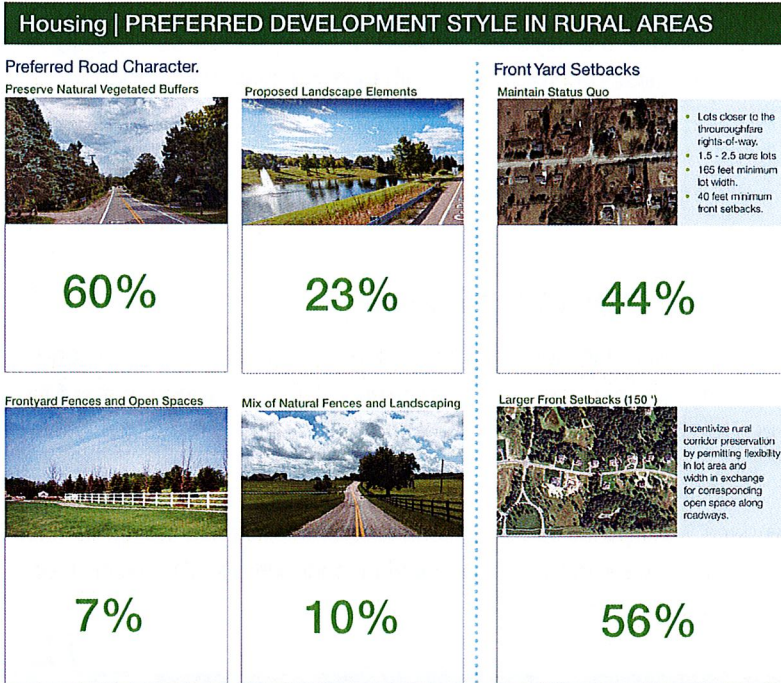
Majority of respondents do not have positive opinion about recent developments in the township due to increased traffic. When asked to recommend areas for potential redevelopment, property adjacent to Baldwin Commons was recommended by one participant.

The property adjacent to Baldwin Commons off Morgan Road would be well suited for multi family as a transition area from commercial to residential and has great walk ability to the area conveniences



## Housing | Single-family, Multiple-Family & Rural Character

The open house focused on gathering input on housing styles and development patterns. A summary of responses are provided in the images below. The input was gathered using a visual preference exercise. The respondents were asked to place a dot on their favorite image. Respondents recognize the need of alternate housing styles such as ADU's and cottage court housing to cater to the aging population. Only a quarter of the respondents did not consider missing middle housing types appropriate in the more densely populated areas of the township. Majority of respondents (57%) did not support single-family developments on smaller lots.





## Widen Roads



- Joslyn Road to alleviate Baldwin traffic
- Waldon M-24 to Independence Township
- Heights Road
- Squirrel Road
- Possibly Clarkston Road (east-west)
- Full rebuild for Brown and Silverbell
- North right turn on Clarkston at Baldwin

## Complete Streets | Roads

Most respondents considered the current conditions of township roads to be either neutral or poor. The attendees were asked multiple questions about potential locations for road widening or building more roads. There were only a couple of responses for new roads, Maybee Road, Silverbell by GM plant and another access to I-75 at Clintonville Road.

When asked about how important is proximity school and parks to their decision regarding the desired location of their home, a majority of respondents considered proximity to both places equally very important.

## Mobility Enhancements



more crosswalks

bike/walking path

Safer, easier crossing at M-24 and other major roads.

Little more directional signage, some solar style lighting, commercial sponsors (without gaudy promotion) to generate revenues for the paths.

sidewalks

Continuation of safety paths throughout township, safer crosswalks

Bike lanes or improved shoulders along all major roadways where the road right a ways are too small for paths.

Joslyn Sidewalk from Indian Woods to Heights Still feels unsafe after repaving

## Complete Streets | Sidewalks

One of the mobility questions focused more on pedestrian safety and non-motorized improvements. The responses indicate a strong interest for improving walkability and bikeability within the township.

The attendees were asked for recommendations for potential locations for future pedestrian, bike path and pedestrian connections. An excerpt of responses is provided below.

## Future pedestrian, bike path, pedestrian connection



Something through or along the Scripps road area.

Elevated or constructed bike paths in the nature and wetland areas.

Maybe constructed / elevated trails in the nature areas and wetlands.

Joslyn Road from Brown to Silverbell; Brown Road from M-24 to Joslyn

Maybee Road west of Baldwin

Indianwood road east of Joslyn. Joslyn road south of Hammerslea

A way to get all the way down M-24 to Auburn Hills past I-75. There is no completely finished safety path.

Waldon Rd (once paved) between Baldwin and Clintonville Road

silverbell and squirrel



## 15-Minute neighborhoods

The 15-Minute Neighborhood concept is based primarily on how far a person can walk or bike in both five- and 15-minute increments for each mode of travel based on the average speed of travel. The definition can vary, but for the purpose of this open house exercise, it is a place where you can access some of your daily needs (food, local services, local goods) within a 15-minute bike ride from your home. The 15-Minute Neighborhood concept is based primarily on how far a person can walk or bike in both five- and 15-minute increments for each mode of travel based on the average speed of travel.

The open house presented four potential 15-minute neighborhoods in the township. Each 15-minute neighborhood typically has a village or hamlet at its core. The attendees were asked questions about supporting the concept and preferred uses in these areas.

Do you support overall idea of 15-minute neighborhoods?



Do you support the Hamlet concept with buildings with limited setback & low-intensity commercial uses at the neighborhood core to promote walkability?



Are the Decker and Friendship Woods locations appropriate for Hamlet style developments?



### What uses would you like to see at the center of each 15-minute neighborhood?

Connections to dining and shopping from neighborhoods.	Fountain with chairs and benches for families to sit	Basic needs retailers, dining, cultural center of some sort for families, perhaps a young people's area too.
It seems we pretty much already have this. With a 15 minute drive to everything, and safety paths continue to make waking and biking an easier access to those businesses.	Restaurants	Dog parks, open space, restaurants,
Pedestrian crosswalks/overpass to encourage walkability	a couple of restaurants/food establishments, Convenience store (without the gas station) and a UPS/fedex office	shopping, parks

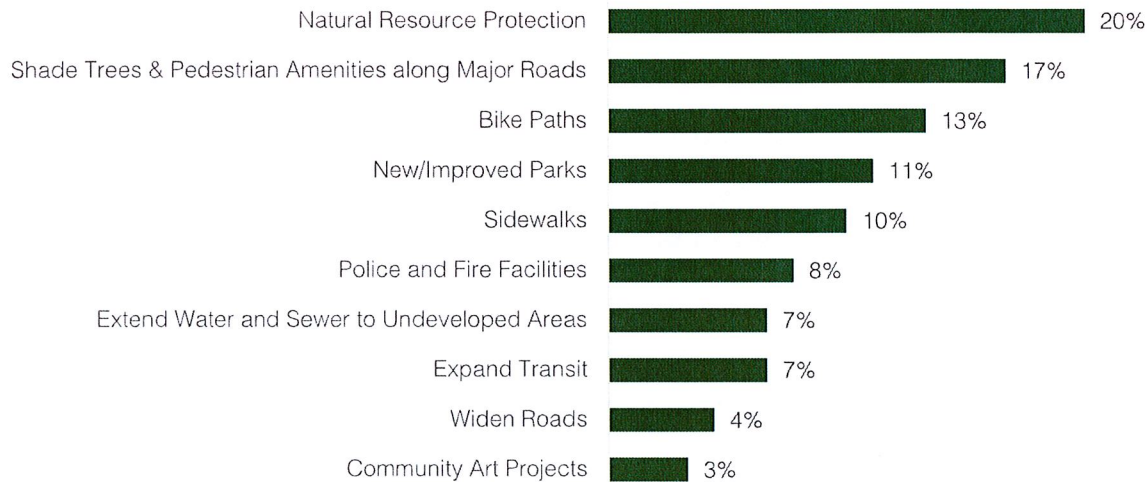
Refer to chapter xx for more details about 15-minute neighborhoods.



## Spending Priorities

The participants were given three dots and ten topics. Each dot represents one million dollars. They were asked, if they are given three million to spend, what three items would they pick to invest? Responses including majority support for preserving existing natural features and adding more trees and pedestrian amenities along major roads.

### MODE OF TRAVEL: ORION TOWNSHIP



Source: Master Plan-Public Input



Township staff, Planning Commission and giffelswebsters planning consultants interacting with the residents at the open house



## Virtual Open House

In addition to the in-person open house, the township also launched the Master Plan Virtual Open House to provide an extended platform for public input. The virtual platform allowed participants to engage with information about the community and provide input on several prompts. The Virtual Open House was promoted via the city's website and social media posts. This was open for a week following the open house. This chapter includes a summary of public input from the virtual open house and the virtual open house.

Township Now!   Land Use   Housing   Complete Streets   15-Minute Neighborhoods

## Welcome to the Orion Township's 2022 Master Plan Update!

We are really looking forward to listening to ideas, comments, observations, and other thoughts from the community.

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Questions are provided at the end of each section. Please review the information and provide your input.

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### What is a Master Plan?



The intent of this update is to understand current demographics, economics, and how our land is currently used, and then explore trends and projections on how Orion Township's population and marketplace may change over the next 10-20 years.





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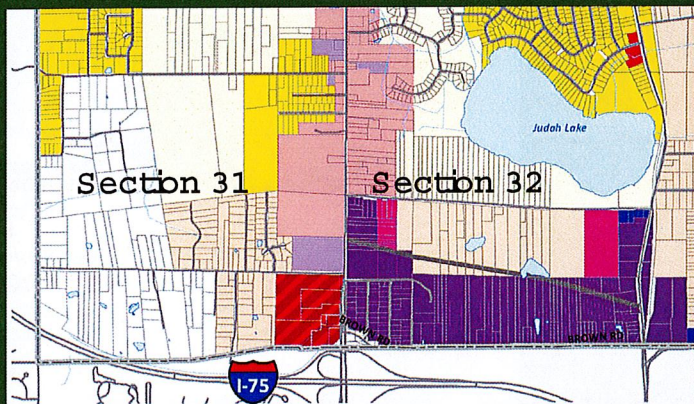
JUL 14 2021

Orion Township  
Planning & Zoning

# Future Land Use Plan

Sections 31 and 32

July 21, 2021



# 2022

## ORION TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN



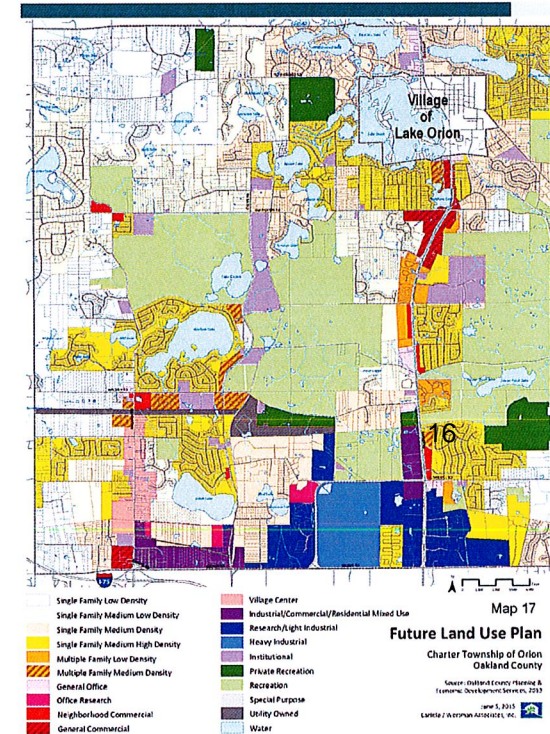
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## PURPOSE OF ANALYZING THE FLU PLAN

- The Future Land Use Plan is the policy foundation for the Zoning Map.
- If the FLU Plan does not properly reflect the desired land use pattern, it will prevent the township from achieving goals over the long term.
- The extensive use of PUDs for traditional or clustered detached single-family development can be a reflection of an out-of-date FLU Plan.
- The goal with updating the FLU Plan as part of the Master Plan Update is to properly account for existing use patterns, while also considering the township's long-term vision for specific areas that will likely be developed.
- An improved FLU Plan should improve future development considerations.



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## EXISTING RESIDENTIAL LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

Future Land Use Plan		Zoning	
Classification	Density	District	Minimum Lot Size
SF Low (Rural Res.)	1 unit/2.5 ac 0.1 to 0.5 du/ac	SF Suburban Farms	2.5 ac
SF Medium Low (septic)	1 unit/1.5 ac 0.5 to 1 du/ac	SE Suburban Estates	1.5 ac
SF Medium (utilities)	1.2 du/ac 1 to 3 du/ac	SR Suburban Ranch	30,000 sf
SF Medium High (includes MHP w/o expansion)	3 to 5 du/ac 8,000 to 14,000 sf lot sizes	R-1 R-2 R-3	14,000 sf 10,800 sf 8,400 sf
MF Low (along Lapeer Rd)	5 to 7 du/ac	RM-1, MF	20.1 rooms/ac
MF Medium (SW Twp)	7 to 9 du/ac	RM-2, MF	22.5 rooms/acre

- SF Low and SF Medium Low classifications are low-density. There are no known recent examples of development projects at this density.
- While the SF Medium classification accounts for utilities, its density standards are still relatively low.
- There is a significant density and lot size gap between SF Medium (30,000 sf) and SF Medium High (14,000 sf).

17

### PC Discussion:

- Should SF Low and SF Medium Low be consolidated into one large lot classification?
- Should SF Medium density be altered?
- Other?



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## HOUSING | APPROVED PUD PROJECTS

PUD Project Name	Units	Acres	Approved Units/Acre	FLUP Classification	FLUP Density
<b>SF Residential</b>					
Bald Mountain (CJ)	387	236	1.6	Private Recreation	N/A
Orion Village Crossing	13	1.5	8.6	Village Center	"Village Like"
Gregory Meadows (CJ)	103	68.857	1.5	SF Medium Low	0.5 to 1 du/ac
Preserve at Baldwin (w/d)	20	48.62	0.4	SF Low	0.1 to 0.5 du/ac
Silver Bell Pointe	46	73.392	0.6	SF Medium	1 to 3 du/ac
Cottages at Gregory Meadows	72	32.82	2.2	SF Medium High	3 to 5 du/ac
<b>Multi-family</b>					
Orion Village	33	7.013	4.7		
Lavender Ridge	260	75.64	3.4	SF Low	0.1 to 0.5 du/ac
<b>Assisted Living</b>					
Laurels of Lake Orion	60	3.465	17.3	Neighborhood Commercial	N/A

### Planner Comments:

Three PUD's have been submitted recently under low-density FLUP Classifications:

1. Preserve at Baldwin – SF Low  
0.4 du/ac – Max 0.5 du/ac (under)
2. Gregory Meadows – SF Medium Low  
1.5 du/ac – Max 1 du/ac (over)
3. Silver Bell Pointe – SF Medium  
0.6 du/ac – Max 3 du/ac (well under)

### PC Discussion:

18

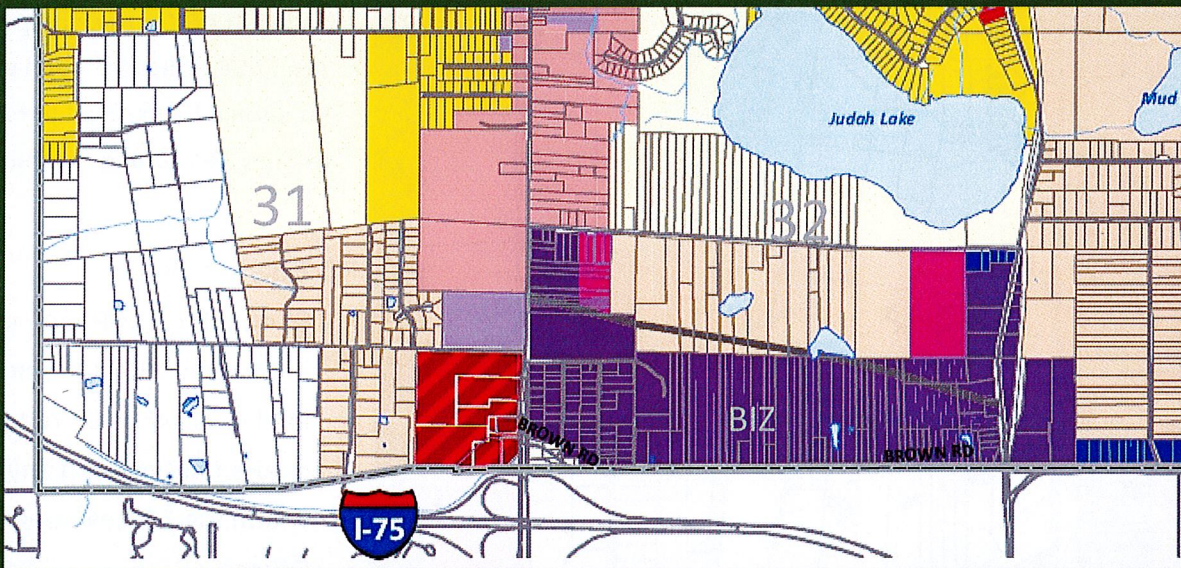
- Should the FLUP classifications (text) specifically address where PUD's are encouraged/discouraged?
- Should PUD's be encouraged adjacent to or near existing PUD's?
- Other?



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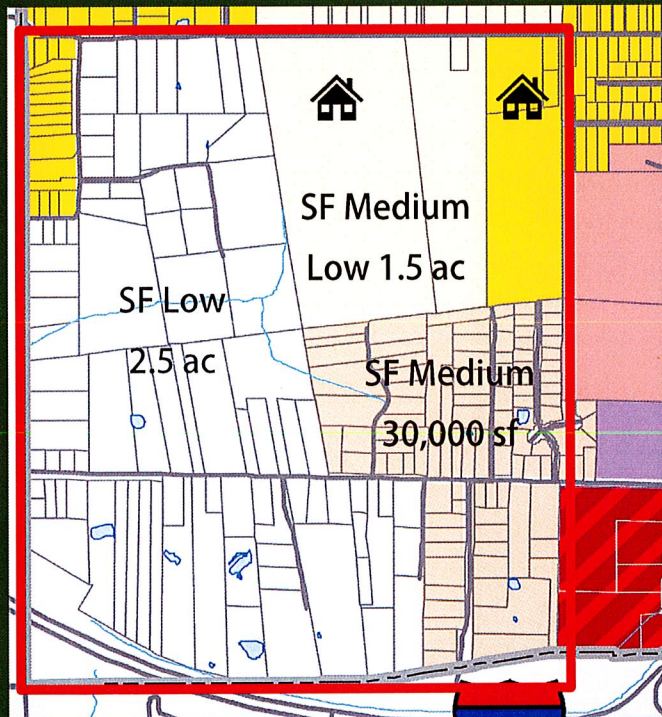


**Sections 31 and 32 and  
BIZ District (for reference)**

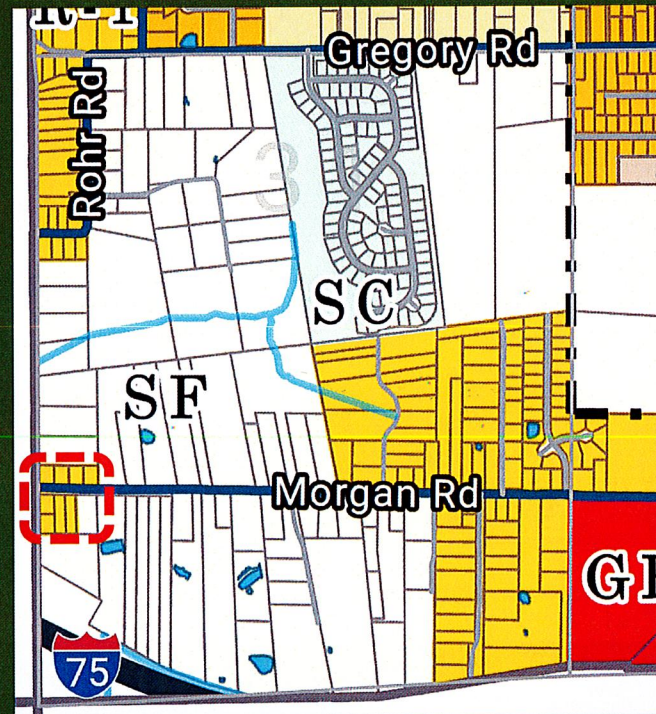




## Section 31 (SW corner of township)



FLU Plan



Zoning Map

### Planner Comments:

- Within Section 31, SF Low and SF Medium Low are the predominant classifications for large lot areas developed without internal streets.
- Approved PUDs could be called out on the FLUP for tracking purposes.
- The FLUP at the west end of Morgan Rd should be updated to reflect existing R-1 zoning (dashed oval).

### PC Discussion: 20

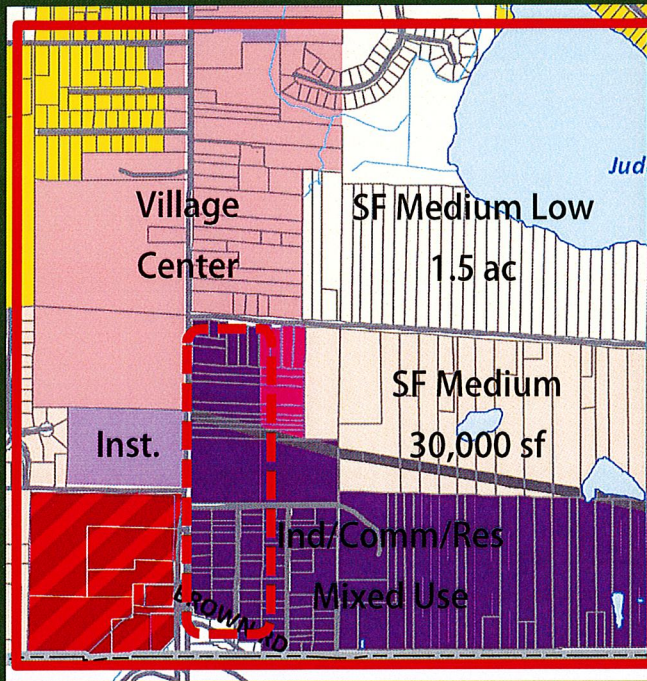
- Should the FLUP map indicate authorized PUDs (home icon)?
- Is PUD or other SF redevelopment desired/anticipated anywhere within the SF Low area?
- Other?



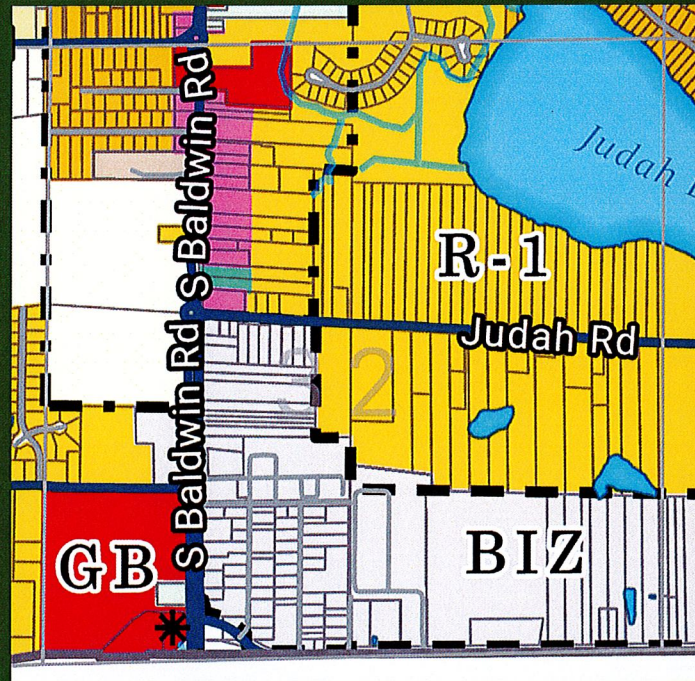
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## Section 32 (S end of Baldwin Rd & W end of BIZ)



FLU Plan



Zoning Map

### Planner Comments:

- R-1 zoning corresponds with the SF Medium High classification, not the FLUP classifications of SF Medium Low and SF Medium on the FLUP.
- Areas fronting on or with primary access to Baldwin Rd (dashed oval) could be re-classified to be consistent with the Baldwin Rd corridor, rather than the BIZ corridor.

### PC Discussion:

21

- Should the Ind/Comm/Res MU (BIZ) area be reduced along Baldwin Rd?
- Should BIZ be extended north to Judah Rd or closer to Judah Rd?
- Is PUD or other development desired/anticipated along the south side of Judah Rd?
- Other?



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To: Tammy Girling, Planning and Zoning Director

From: Don Gross, Planning Commissioner

RE: Master Plan Comments

Date: March 4, 2021

Some thoughts while reading the Giffels-Webster Master Plan Update. Please pass along.

2015 Master Plan goals – Economic Development - states: “provide jobs for existing and future residents in a sustainable manner. I think we can all agree that the township is not responsible for “providing” jobs. A more appropriate goal might be to encourage the creation of jobs and employment opportunities consistent with the strategic plan of the Oakland county Economic Development Department.

Identify and support uses that are compatible with existing and proposed residential neighborhoods and develop an attraction plan to encourage their location in the community.

As community ages – develop rehab programs for residential properties, potential use of CDBG programs

Identify the role of the Village of Orion relative to their commercial needs of the Township.

Industrial areas located to take advantage of the interstate highway system (I-75) and reduce traffic and environmental concerns on other portions of the community.

Environmental Resources – Rich in environmental resources and should be exploited – State lands, County land and parks, lakes, public and private open spaces that have been allocated in PUDs and other developed properties. Need for continued maintenance.

Transportation – regional significance in attracting economic development and residential stabilization. Multi-modal – auto, bike system, pedestrian, SMART ,etc. Need to prepare for EOVS and how to accommodate for them.

Community facilities – should include police/fire locations and servability to the community. School locations, parks (state, county, local), Community buildings –Township hall, library, Orion Center, Village resources, etc.

Theme – People like it and still use it - “Where living is a vacation”

Just some thought on a quite COVID night.

To: Tammy Girling, Planning and Zoning Director; Rod Arroyo, Giffels and Webster

From: Donald Gross, Planning Commissioner

RE: Master Plan Consideration

Date: Feb. 21, 2012

As we begin to examine the Orion Township master plan I would like to put forth a consideration for the land fill in the township. The life span of the landfill is not near capacity but it is not too early to begin to examine alternatives once it is complete as we look to the future. The attached articles provide some insight into potential uses for landfills that can benefit communities. The introduction of a "solar farm" could provide some long term economic benefits, employment opportunities, energy conservation, and a future productive use of a large parcel of real estate.

There may be other uses but I do not think it is too early to begin exploring future uses of the site.

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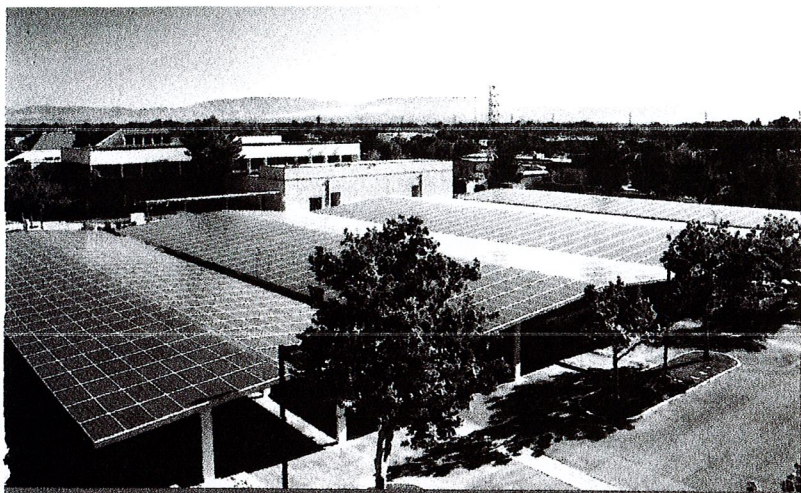


# Taking SOLAR FURTHER

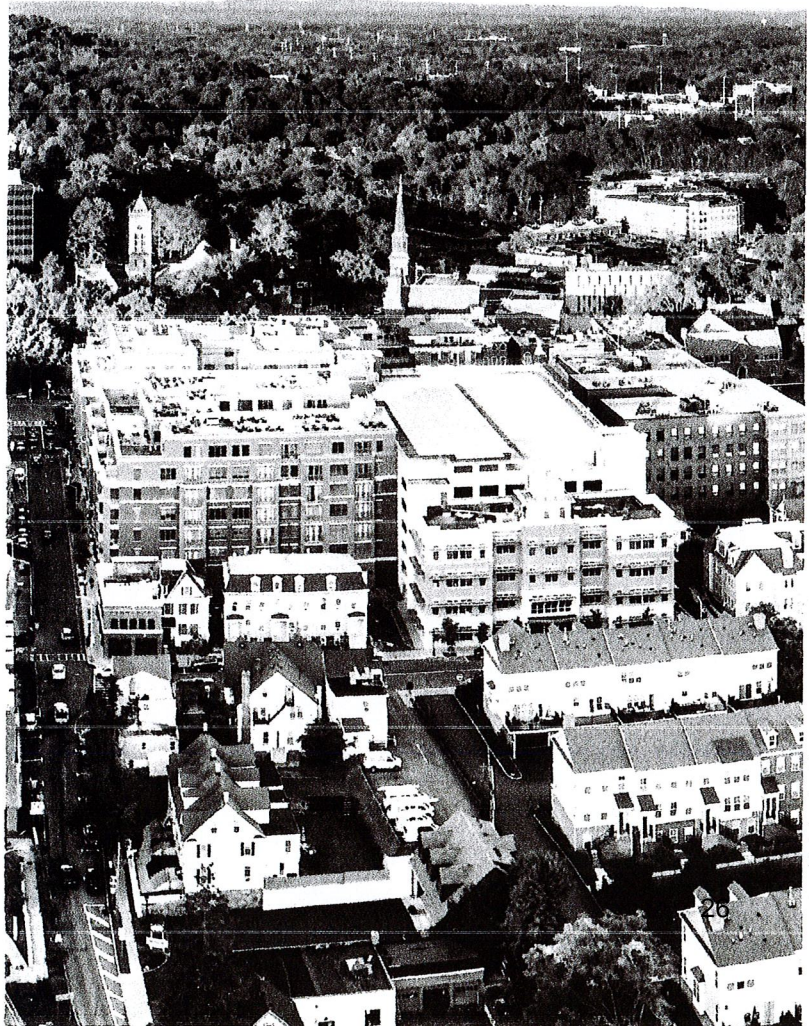
BY GABRIEL RUSK  
AND DENA DELAVIZ







Local governments are making it easier for residents and businesses to access solar energy and its many benefits.



or over 10 years, ICMA has worked with a variety of partners to help make solar energy adoption easier and more affordable for local governments across the United States.

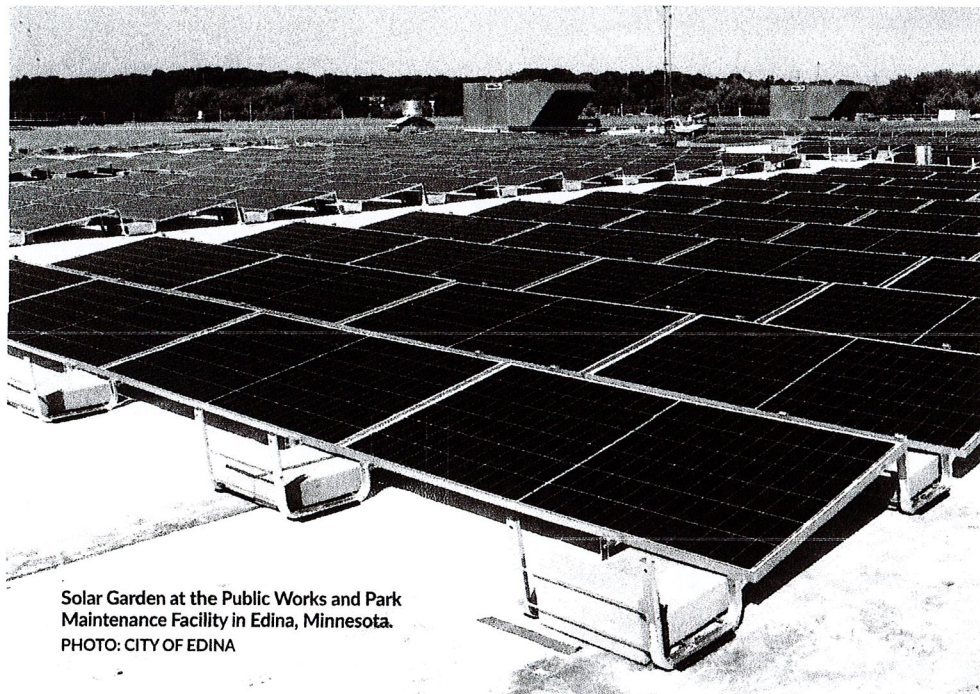
Most recently, to assist more local governments in achieving their large-scale goals, ICMA has partnered with the American Planning Association (APA) on Solar@Scale, a new U.S. Department of Energy-funded project to help cities, counties, and special districts understand and realize the potential benefits of large-scale solar development. The project will provide resources to help local governments create catalytic impact in communities of all sizes across the United States with scalable procedures and tools for the efficient implementation of large-scale solar energy facilities.

Solar@Scale is convening public and private stakeholders to assist in developing a comprehensive large-scale solar guidebook. This guide will help planners and local officials take advantage of opportunities to site solar projects on public lands and to update plans, zoning regulations, development review procedures, and assistance programs to make context-sensitive, large-scale solar development on private sites easier. Beginning in 2021, the guide will be shared through trainings, workshops, webinars, and conference sessions for years to come.

While technological developments have dramatically reduced the cost of installing solar photovoltaic systems in the United States, soft costs or “nonhardware costs,” such as permitting, inspection, interconnection to the electric grid, and customer acquisition, still represent significant financial barriers to the growth of the solar market.<sup>1</sup> Differences in permitting and regulatory procedures, for example, can result in price differences from \$3,200 to \$4,700 for a typical residential solar installation. By taking steps to reduce these soft costs, municipalities can help homeowners, installers, and even their own local government save money.<sup>2</sup>

In order to better understand and address how local governments can take action to reduce soft costs, ICMA launched the Solar Outreach Partnership in 2010. Funded by the U.S. Department of Energy and managed by ICMA from 2010 to 2016, the project sought to increase the use of solar technologies and lower the cost of solar power by sharing best practices among local governments, funding research and





Solar Garden at the Public Works and Park Maintenance Facility in Edina, Minnesota.  
PHOTO: CITY OF EDINA

development, and reducing common barriers to solar energy adoption. As part of the project, the ICMA team developed and distributed a guidebook and implemented national and regional workshops designed to help local governments overcome barriers to solar development in their communities that reached over 2,300 local government professionals. To analyze changes in the priorities and activities of local governments relating to solar, ICMA conducted surveys of communities across the United States in 2010<sup>3</sup> and 2016.<sup>4</sup> Based on these survey data, ICMA identified significant growth in local government engagement with solar.<sup>5</sup>

### SolSmart

In 2015, in an effort to build on these promising signs of growth in the solar market, ICMA, in partnership with The Solar Foundation, launched SolSmart a national designation and technical assistance program funded by the U.S. Department of Energy that assists local governments in their efforts to reduce barriers to the adoption of solar energy systems. SolSmart provides no-cost technical assistance to local governments working to improve solar energy market conditions. As of November 2020, nearly 91 million U.S. residents live in a SolSmart community. More than 380 city, county, and regional organizations nationwide have been awarded SolSmart designation in recognition of their efforts to make it easier and more affordable for residents and businesses to install solar energy systems.

In addition to addressing soft cost barriers to solar through SolSmart and the Solar Outreach Partnership, ICMA aims to expand solar access to underserved segments of the market, specifically low- and moderate-income (LMI) households. To that end, ICMA supported the Department of Energy's Solar Energy Technologies Office by managing and administering the Solar In Your Community Challenge, a \$5 million prize competition. The challenge was designed to incentivize the development of new approaches to increase the affordability of electricity while expanding solar adoption across America through grant cash prizes and services in the form of seed prizes, final prizes, coaches, general consultants, and expert technical assistance services.

The Grand Prize of \$500,000 was awarded to The Care Project, created by the Denver Housing Authority (DHA), who developed, owned, and operated offsite solar arrays to power DHA's multifamily affordable housing buildings. As the guarantor of the power purchase agreement, DHA was able to ease financiers' potential concerns about lending to projects comprised of LMI households. DHA worked with Xcel Energy, the local utility, to develop the projects and apply the savings to the energy bills of LMI residents in DHA's buildings.

### Ypsilanti, Michigan

Much like Denver, the city of Ypsilanti has also capitalized on services that ICMA

offers to help local governments pursue their solar energy goals. Over the past 15 years, Ypsilanti, Michigan (pop. 20,995), experienced tremendous growth, from producing zero megawatts (MW) of solar power to producing 1.38 MW—enough to power over 210 homes.<sup>6</sup> How did this happen? According to City Manager Frances McMullan, "It all started with a local resident, Dave Strenski, who had a passion for implementing solar power in Ypsilanti." In 2005, a volunteer grassroots initiative called SolarYpsi, led by Strenski, installed a four-panel solar array on the roof of the Ypsilanti Food Cooperative. Since that project, the group of volunteers utilized grant funding and innovative thinking to advance the use of solar energy in the community. In 2013, the city of Ypsilanti adopted a resolution to install 1,000 solar rooftops by 2020. City officials even collaborated with SolarYpsi to install panels atop the municipality's city hall. Today, the city stands among the top 20 municipalities nationwide for solar power production on a watts-per-capita basis, alongside the likes of San Francisco, Austin, and Hartford. "Our success has come from a 'stop talking and just do it' attitude," said McMullan. That decisive attitude has been bolstered by the city's effort to reduce soft costs of solar installation by streamlining the permitting and inspection process through the SolSmart program.

In 2017, the city received Gold designation from SolSmart. Since designation, Ypsilanti has continued to learn more about how permitting can be improved. According to Strenski, "One lesson we're experiencing now is tracking data for the 70+ solar installations in the city. We should have changed the permitting process for solar to record and track total system wattage, panel wattage, panel and inverter type, and a few other details."

Local governments are not limited to demonstrating support for the residential rooftop solar market. As costs for utility scale solar have declined, large-scale solar projects have experienced a new surge in market share. In 2012, with the assistance of SolarYpsi and the Highland Cemetery Association, the city of Ypsilanti worked to build a 844-kilowatt array consisting of 2,520 panels in unused cemetery space, enough to power over 130 homes.<sup>7</sup> Understanding these market drivers ultimately helps communities make informed



decisions in evaluating renewable energy proposals and crafting plans about how future development could happen.

### Edina, Minnesota

The city of Edina, Minnesota, is a prime example of how a local government can use that understanding of market drivers to develop innovative large-scale solar proposals that meet their community's energy needs. In 2015, in response to calls from city residents for a more environmentally friendly city, Edina's Energy and Environment Commission proposed to establish a subscription-based community solar garden. The solar garden accomplished financing by committing 68 households to subscribe for 25 years. The community solar garden serves households at any income level thanks to a collaboration that included Cooperative Energy Futures, a local solar developer that served Edina's Community Garden beneficiaries with power at a rate lower than traditional electricity bills. Completed in 2018, the Edina Community Solar Garden consists of 1,926 solar panels generating 618 kW of solar power for the community.<sup>8</sup>

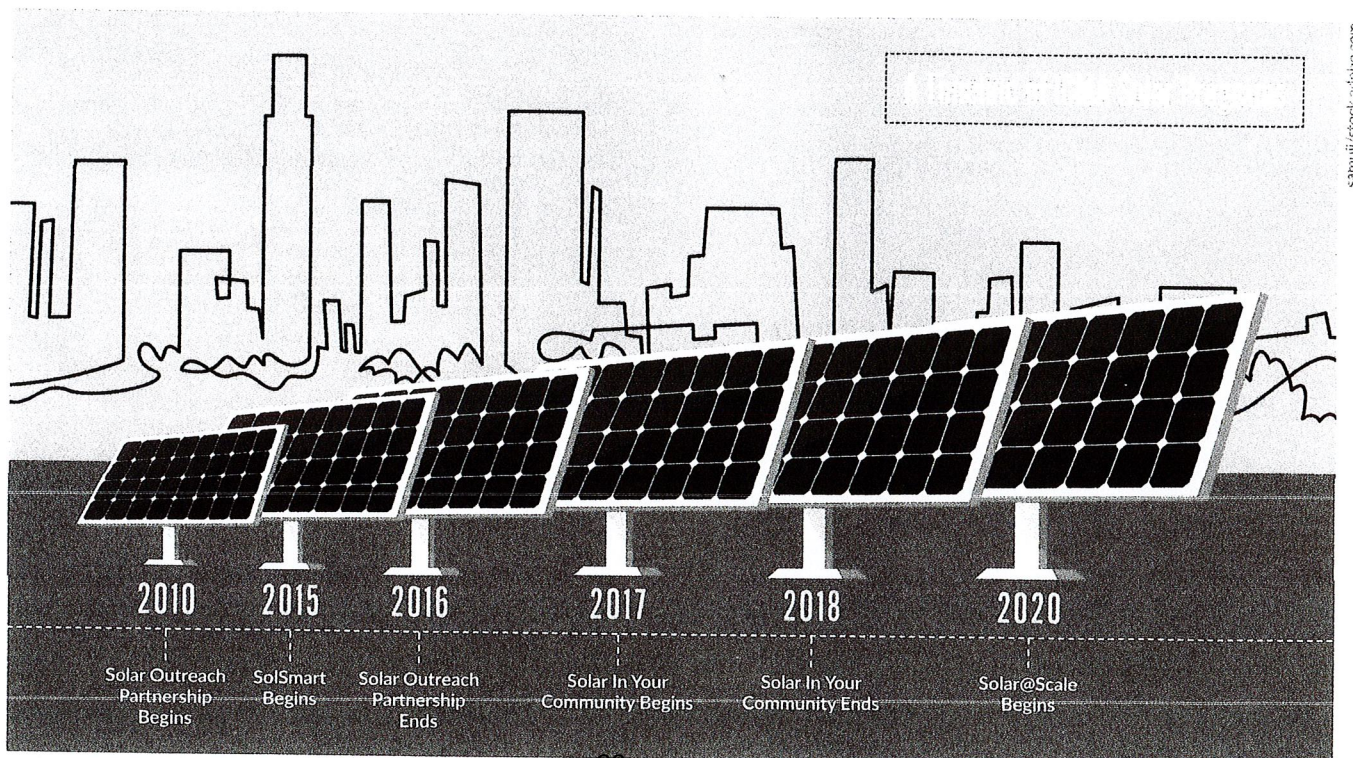
During the implementation of this project, Edina worked with SolSmart to review the city's permitting, inspection, and ordinances to remove barriers to residents and businesses interested in installing solar. For over a year, city staff and SolSmart technical assistants critically evaluated Edina's processes and ordinances. Edina recreated the city's Photovoltaic Roof-Mounted System permitting process that produced permits within three days, launching an online scheduling platform for inspections. These efforts, combined with the completion of the Community Solar Garden, led to Edina earning the prestigious SolSmart Gold designation in early 2019, with special awards in permitting and inspection.

### WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Another SolSmart Gold designated community, West Palm Beach, Florida, achieved faster approval rates to install solar arrays by establishing an expedited, one-day solar permitting process for photovoltaic systems of 10 kW or less, becoming the first city in the state of Florida to do so. By expediting the permitting process, the community has been able to add more than 665 kW of solar energy since mid-2018, representing 50% growth year over year. West Palm Beach has also enrolled in Florida Power and Light's Solar Together program, a shared solar subscription plan that increases municipal use of solar energy. The subscription allows West Palm Beach to offset nearly 12 MW of electricity through large-scale solar farms, enough to power about 1,440 homes.<sup>9</sup>

### Solar Makes Cents

Communities are benefitting from the fastest growing energy source in the world.<sup>10</sup> According to a study published in November 2020 by the International Energy Agency (IEA), solar energy is expected to account for as much as 60% of new clean energy capacity and generate 27% of the world's electricity in 2020.<sup>11</sup> The United States led the second-largest market in cumulative and annual PV installations in 2019, with the first quarter of 2020 setting the record for the most PV installations in history in both residential and utility markets.<sup>12</sup>



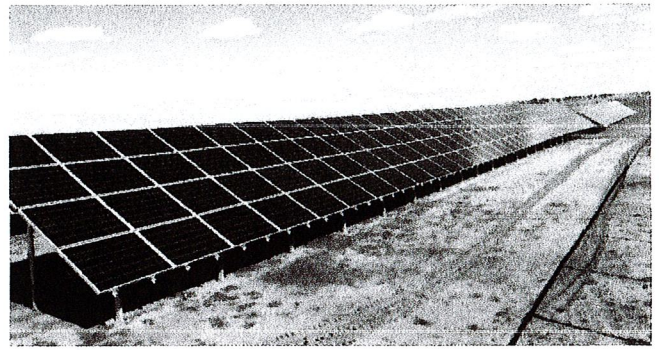


The recent boom of solar installation can largely be attributed to significant declines in solar hardware and panel costs. Furthermore, the drop in solar costs made solar energy competitive without subsidies with fossil fuels across the United States for residential consumers, which saw a 57% drop in PV price estimates; commercial purchasers with a 76% drop; and local utilities with a 78% decrease in prices.<sup>13</sup> Solar power is now the cheapest energy source in history, surpassing coal and gas in most countries.<sup>14</sup> The affordability of solar presents an attractive investment opportunity to municipalities for a number of reasons. Firstly, municipalities can simultaneously take advantage of plentiful sunny real estate on public buildings rooftops or publicly held land, while cutting down on the second largest expenditure for local governments—energy bills. Moreover, net metering provides incentives for residents to contribute to the energy supply and collect energy credits to lower their own utility costs later.<sup>15</sup> Finally, municipalities can reinvest more money locally when they reduce electric bill payments to out-of-state utility holding companies. This investment is often realized in terms of tangible economic growth.

Solar energy drives economic growth by creating local jobs and stimulating the local economy. Since 2010, solar jobs in the United States have grown by 167%, almost 250,000 jobs. In the past five years, solar employment has increased five times faster than job growth in the overall U.S. economy.<sup>16</sup>

Increasingly, local governments are taking a leading role in the growth of the global solar energy market. By addressing soft costs of solar energy, local governments can make access to solar more feasible and reduce expenses for residents and businesses through the streamlining of permitting and inspections. They can act as a catalyst for their communities and local utility companies to institute large-scale energy solutions.

If your local government is interested in making your community “solar friendly,” your local government can find solar resources and additional case studies at [solsmart.org](http://solsmart.org), or simply set up a

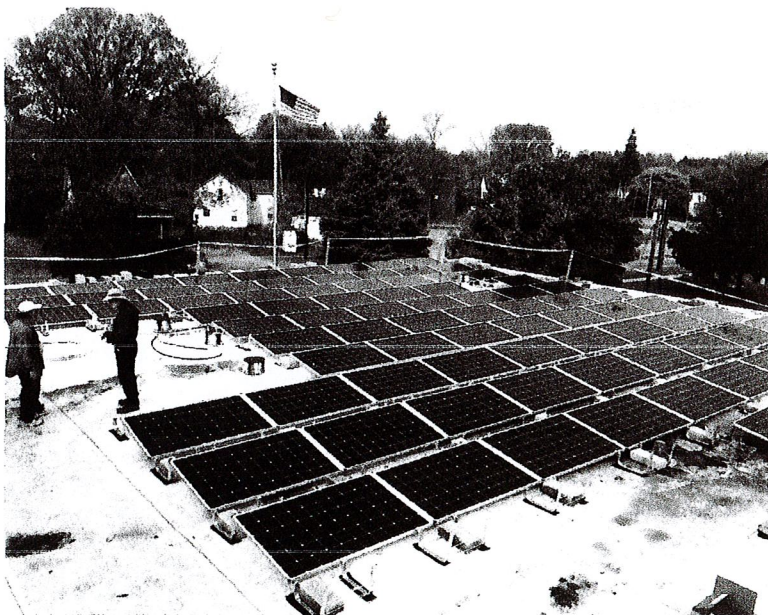


Solar Array in Aurora, Colorado

consultation call through SolSmart.org to receive free technical assistance from a solar expert. Furthermore, if your community is interested in utility-scale solar, stay tuned for the Solar@Scale guidebook, expected in the second half of 2021. With a keen understanding of the challenges that communities face in enhancing solar growth, ICMA stands ready to assist local governments in achieving their energy goals. **PM**

#### ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.nrel.gov/news/program/2019/nrel-partners-with-solsmart-to-bring-solar-to-more-than-300-us-cities-and-counties.html>
- <sup>2</sup> [https://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/tackling-solar-energy-s-soft-costs.aspx#:~:text=Solar%20soft%20costs%20are%20the,solar%20photovoltaic%20\(PV\)%20system.](https://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/tackling-solar-energy-s-soft-costs.aspx#:~:text=Solar%20soft%20costs%20are%20the,solar%20photovoltaic%20(PV)%20system.)
- <sup>3</sup> [https://icma.org/sites/default/files/301646\\_ICMA%202010%20Sustainability%20Survey%20Summary.pdf](https://icma.org/sites/default/files/301646_ICMA%202010%20Sustainability%20Survey%20Summary.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> [https://icma.org/sites/default/files/308499\\_17-030%20Solar%20Survey%20Results%20Summary%20Report.pdf](https://icma.org/sites/default/files/308499_17-030%20Solar%20Survey%20Results%20Summary%20Report.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> [https://icma.org/sites/default/files/308640\\_Solar%20Survey%20Snapshot.pdf](https://icma.org/sites/default/files/308640_Solar%20Survey%20Snapshot.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.seia.org/initiatives/whats-megawatt>
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.solarypsi.org/CemCremArticle.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://solsmart.org/case-study-edina-minnesota/>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://solsmart.org/solsmart300/>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://www.c2es.org/content/renewable-energy/#:~:text=Solar%20photovoltaics%20are%20the%20fastest,percent%20of%20the%20world's%20electricity.>
- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2020/11/10/world-could-add-more-than-900-gw-of-solar-by-2025-if-politicians-grasp-the-nettle-iew/>
- <sup>12</sup> [https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/08/31/2085905/0/en/The-United-States-solar-energy-market-is-expected-to-grow-at-a-CAGR-of-17-32-during-2020-2025.html#:~:text=%2D%20In%2019%2C%20the%20United%20States,the%20significant%20share%20\(61.05%25\).](https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/08/31/2085905/0/en/The-United-States-solar-energy-market-is-expected-to-grow-at-a-CAGR-of-17-32-during-2020-2025.html#:~:text=%2D%20In%2019%2C%20the%20United%20States,the%20significant%20share%20(61.05%25).)
- <sup>13</sup> <https://www.thesolarfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/SolarJobsCensus2019.pdf>
- <sup>14</sup> <https://www.carbonbrief.org/solar-is-now-cheapest-electricity-in-history-confirms-iewa#:~:text=Multiple%20Authors,Simon%20Evans%20Josh&text=The%20world's%20best%20solar%20power,Agency's%20World%20Energy%20Outlook%202020.>
- <sup>15</sup> <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/go-solar/solar-for-municipalities/>
- <sup>16</sup> <https://www.thesolarfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/SolarJobsCensus2019.pdf>



Two SolarYpsi volunteers stand by the solar array installed at Ypsilanti's Firehouse.

**GABRIEL RUSK's** passion for sustainability is reflected in his work on the SolSmart Program and Solar@Scale as an assistant program manager II at ICMA. Gabriel graduated from Xavier University with a master of arts degree in private interest and the public good in 2019. ([grusk@icma.org](mailto:grusk@icma.org))



**DENA DELAVIZ** earned a master of public policy degree from Carnegie Mellon and is an assistant program manager for ICMA, working on the SolSmart Program. She has worked in the solar industry since 2018. ([ddelaviz@icma.org](mailto:ddelaviz@icma.org))





# Improving the Local Rules of the Game for Large-Scale Solar

APA research team partners with ICMA on a new solar-based program, Solar@Scale

Solar energy is a powerful tool in the fight against climate change, and solar industry jobs have tremendous potential to play a major role in post-pandemic economic recovery efforts and in an equitable transition to a clean energy future. Simply put, every community has access to sunlight, and the cost of photovoltaic (PV) systems has dropped dramatically since 2010.

Over the past 15 years, hundreds (if not thousands) of cities, towns, and counties across the U.S. have updated their plans and zoning codes—and streamlined permitting processes—to make it easier for property owners to install rooftop and small ground-mounted solar energy systems. And many others have led by example and installed small PV systems on public buildings and grounds.

For most communities, though, a new solar farm is a major commitment. They take up a lot of space, often from several dozen to several hundred acres. And they typically look quite different from surrounding land uses. With varying rules from community to community, it is difficult for planners to know when the differences are justifiable or merely a result of each community reinventing the wheel. Today's planners need new insights and guidance to improve solar-development outcomes.

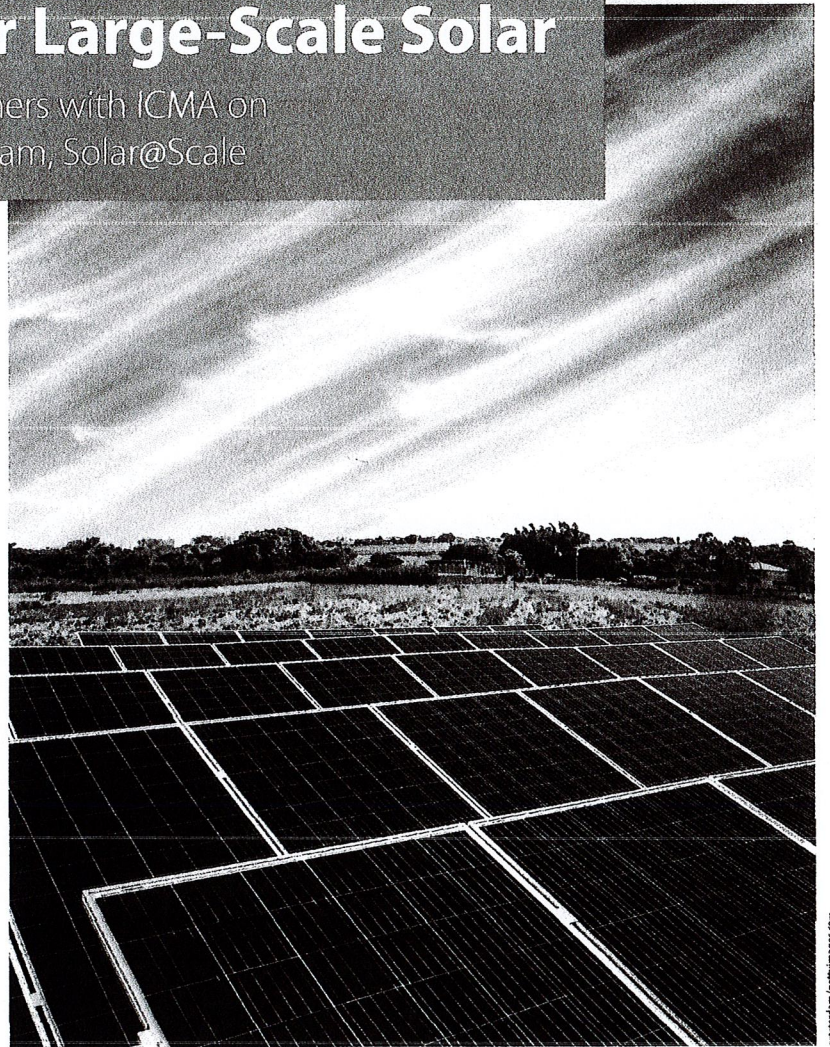
**Solar@Scale, a new program to help cities, counties, and special districts understand and realize the potential benefits of large-scale solar development**, headed up by APA and International City/County Management Association (ICMA), aims to address these needs. With support from the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Energy Technologies Office, APA and the ICMA have convened a diverse set of planners and other public and private stakeholders to identify promising strategies for overcoming common local barriers to large-scale solar development in rural areas and on previously developed land, such as capped landfills and other brownfield sites.

In the coming months, APA will help translate these strategies into a guide

to help planners and local officials take advantage of opportunities to site solar projects on public lands and to update plans, zoning regulations, development review procedures, and assistance programs to make context-sensitive large-scale solar development on private sites easier. By the summer of 2021, the Solar@Scale team will begin sharing this guidance through a series of workshops and training opportunities.

Collectively, this work will help planners elevate their voice in local conversations about the relationship of large-scale solar development to community goals and priorities. And it will help them advocate for solar projects that promote an equitable distribution of community benefits.

Have a question about Solar@Scale or want to share your experiences with planning and zoning for large-scale solar development? Contact [solar@planning.org](mailto:solar@planning.org).



arturdam/Gettyimages.com



**From:** Markel, Carissa <[cmarkel@rcoc.org](mailto:cmarkel@rcoc.org)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 2, 2021 2:22 PM  
**To:** Tammy Girling <[tgirling@oriontownship.org](mailto:tgirling@oriontownship.org)>  
**Cc:** Plumer, Sarah <[splumer@rcoc.org](mailto:splumer@rcoc.org)>  
**Subject:** Orion Notice of Intent - Master Plan 2021

Hello Tammy,

The Road Commission for Oakland County has received the Notice of Intent to Plan letter. I am one of people that will be reviewing the 2021 Master Plan Draft and providing comments. Please email me a copy of the draft plan when available.

Thank you,



Carissa Markel, P.E.

Planner III

31001 Lahser Road

Beverly Hills, MI 48025

Phone: (248) 645-2000 x2215

E-mail: [cmarkel@rcoc.org](mailto:cmarkel@rcoc.org)



*Jim Nash*

March 2, 2021

Scott Reynolds  
Planning Commission  
Charter Township of Orion  
2525 Joslyn Road  
Lake Orion, MI 48360

Reference: Notice of Intent to Plan  
Charter Township of Orion

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Orion Township's Master Plan proposed amendments.

There are several County Drains maintained and operated within Orion Township. The restoration and protection of the various Drainage Districts are an important objective of this office. Please be aware that my office is prepared to assist the Township in this endeavor under the relevant sections of the Michigan Drain Code.

Additionally, the County Drains located in Orion Township are within the Federal Phase-II Storm Water Program's "Urbanized Area," and therefore are subject to applicable Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit requirements. Specifically, Post-Construction requirements include site plan review, water quality performance standards, channel protection performance standards, long-term operations and maintenance and an enforcement/tracking procedure.

Also, worth mentioning it is the goal of the Oakland County Water Resource Commissioner to be a leader in stormwater quality in the State of Michigan. The current WRC stormwater standards have been in place for many years and do not currently contain design standards that will meet new MDEQ MS4 permit guidelines or emerging innovative stormwater management philosophy. The WRC submitted their MS4 permit application on April 1, 2015. The plan was approved in 2020 and we anticipate implementing the new standards in 2021.



My office is prepared to assist the city with the design and construction of future sewer extensions and drainage facility improvements. We will continue to cooperate with timely reviews of plans and the issuance of permits relating to utility construction. I look forward to continuing our success in working with Orion Township.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Nash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Jim Nash, Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner

C: Ryan Dividock, AICP, PCP – Oakland County Planning & Economic  
Development Services

Tammy Girling, Planning & Zoning Director – Orion Township

## Tammy Girling

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**From:** Mike Flood  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 21, 2021 11:05 PM  
**To:** Tammy Girling  
**Cc:** Scott Reynolds; Kim Urbanowski; Chris Barnett; David Goodloe  
**Subject:** Zoning Ord.78 5-Year Master Plan Updating

Greetings Tammy,

RE: PC Updating 5-year Master Plan

Wanting to touch base with you for a possible PC and planning consultant's review/discussion pertaining to being pro-active as follows:

Zoning Ordinance 78, Article XXVII, 27.04 Parking and Loading Regulations, (f) Electric Vehicle Charging Stations, (added 09.21.09, amended 01.03.16)

As you may recall I brought this same subject matter up a couple of years ago at one of our annual Township Joint PC, ZBA, BOT Meetings.

It is my belief the time has come to be more pro-active requiring future township commercial developments (to install at least the underground infrastructure) requiring a number of dedicated parking spaces to accommodate EV vehicles.

It is my understanding the city of Auburn Hills has implemented this requirement. This is the future of the auto industry.

For instance, as part of our new township hall complex, we are supposed to be installing a couple of dedicated EV charging parking spots. BEING PRO-ACTIVE.

Thanks,  
To Serve,  
Mike

"Transparency of local grassroots  
government"



## Courtney Keisman

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**Subject:** FW: Master Plan input - Safety Path Need

-----Original Message-----

From: Amy Bolvari <bolvari@sbcglobal.net>  
Sent: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 9:15 AM  
To: Tammy Girling <tgirling@oriontownship.org>  
Subject: Master Plan input - Safety Path Need

Good morning,

I was notified that you were taking inputs on the master plan. My family loves Orion and lives here for the good schools and the fact that it is not overly developed. I never want Orion to be like Royal Oak or Birmingham. I like the wild undeveloped spaces, it is what gives Orion character and makes it like a vacation to live here. There does not need to be something on every corner, I don't want that. I also don't want dense housing added anywhere. I think we have enough, but if more is added lots need to be an acre or more.

We also like to walk and bike, but we have one problem. Our subdivision is completely cut off from all safety paths. We live on Clint Court. The entrance to our sub is Crystal Creek right at Baldwin, north of Indianwood. We can't let our 14 year old bike to a friends house just a couple miles away or even go with him because it's too dangerous. At a minimum a path between Crystal Creek and Stanton would be great! This would allow us to get to dirt roads that are not so busy and where my sons friends live. I would like to see one all the way up Baldwin to Stanton and beyond.

Please feel free to contact me!

Thanks,  
Amy Bolvari  
374 Clint Court  
Lake Orion, 48362  
248-535-0555 cell

Sent from my iPhone



## Courtney Keisman

---

**Subject:** FW: Master Plan input

**From:** Penny Shults <[pshults@oriontownship.org](mailto:pshults@oriontownship.org)>

**Sent:** Monday, June 14, 2021 3:53 PM

**To:** Tammy Girling <[tgirling@oriontownship.org](mailto:tgirling@oriontownship.org)>

**Subject:** Master Plan input

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding Master Planning for Orion Township. I have two areas of concern. The first is the noise ordinance and the second is the use of dirt bikes, ATV's and other motorized vehicles in residential neighborhoods. The more populated our community becomes the more important it is to have proper zoning regulations to ensure that neighbors can enjoy their property peacefully.



### Penny S. Shults

Orion Township Clerk | Clerks Office  
2525 Joslyn Road | Lake Orion, MI  
48360  
O: 248.391.0304, ext. 4001 | F:  
248.391.9984 [www.oriontownship.org](http://www.oriontownship.org)

*"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." The Bible*