



Fresh Coast Planning

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MEMORANDUM

To: Crockery Township Planning Commission
From: Julie Lovelace
Date: May 15, 2024
Re: Master Plan Chapter Three

Attached within the agenda is a clean copy of the first draft of the Agriculture chapter. Much of the current Master Plan regarding the agricultural lands is still very relevant and useful. That which was outdated or redundant we have deleted. We have taken references regarding the Agricultural lands and classification from multiple places within the existing document to create this new chapter.

Attached separately is a copy with comments to generate discussion. This is meant to be viewed electronically. The page references you see in parentheses denote that it was taken from existing text and directs where to find it in the existing plan. Anything bolded is new wording.

The goal is for this draft to generate discussion to ensure everything within it is still relevant and will meet the needs of the Township well into the future.

Julie Lovelace
Planner

Chapter Three

Agricultural Policy

Agricultural Uses

The Township's rural openness has been highly valued by residents and is intended to be preserved. Historically, Crockery Township has been mostly an agrarian community **and recent public input has indicated a desire to continue to protect agricultural lands and the rural character.** However, there is also ample room to accommodate diverse types of future growth and development in appropriate areas.

Soils

The agriculture classification includes the rural areas of the Township which contain primarily USDA designated prime or unique farmlands. Because of the physical, chemical, and distribution of soils contained in these areas, they are capable of producing high yields of crops or specific high value crops. Establishment of the agricultural preservation district is intended to promote agricultural activity as the priority land use within the areas of the Township considered best suited for agricultural use. This district is also intended to promote the conservation of rural qualities such as wood lots, wetlands, and meadows. This approach will lessen the adverse effects of sprawl development along the rural roadways.

Most of the land in the eastern and south central parts of the township is heavier clay loam soils well suited for general farming. Most of the land in the central, west, and northwest part of the township, and along the river in the southeast, is light and sandy soil best suited for small fruits and orchards.

Virtually the entire southeast half of the Township is made up of the Bowers-Hettinger-Nester association. This association is characterized by loamy, well drained to poorly drained soils. Much of this association is classified as "prime agricultural soils" by the USDA. Because these soils are conducive to farming, this area contains the majority of the Township's active farms. **Figure 3 Agricultural Analysis** classifies the soils of the Township that are considered "prime" based on their favorable characteristics for crop production.

The northwest half of the Township is made up of soil associations consisting mainly of sand interspersed with clay. These sands are poorly suited for most types of general agriculture, but better suited to specialized crops such as blueberries.

Development

The Township recognizes that the potential loss of truly valuable farmland and unique natural resources to development is an irreversible loss not only to local residents but the region, state, nation, and future generations. It is therefore the intent of Crockery Township to promote the preservation of truly valuable farmland and the conservation of unique natural resource areas such as wetlands and floodplains by directing growth and land uses considered incompatible with these resources to those areas of the Township considered to have a higher sustainability for such development.

All development should consider the natural capabilities of the land to support the development and the available services and facilities necessary to assure the continued protection of the public health, safety, and welfare of all Township residents.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs offer a means to preserve agricultural land and open space but the current residents must be willing to fund such programs.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) offers another option, but since Crockery Township currently has no heavily developed areas with public water and sanitary sewer, such a plan would be very difficult to implement.

Maintaining large parcel sizes for new parcels in agricultural areas discourages conflicting non-farm development. Crockery Township should maintain a consistent agricultural designation for large parcels in AG-1 and AG-2. Such measures typically result in a very low density of residential development in the farming areas and other areas ill-suited for intensive development for reasons such as poor drainage and soils.

Large lot zoning is intended to provide for the compatible coexistence of low-density residential uses, agricultural uses, and valuable natural resources. Large lot zoning increases the minimum lot size required for development in agricultural zoning districts. However, it should be noted that requiring large lots for individual homes can have a detrimental effect by increasing the cost of services per home site and taking large parcels out of agricultural production.

Development Staging- The demand for additional developable land and demands for utilities and other public services go hand in hand. Because of this, a major objective of the Master Plan is to direct development into areas best able to support it and conversely to delineate the areas that are not suited for major development within the planning period. To promote the efficient provisions of public services, maintain rural character, and to control sprawl development situations, it is necessary that the highest densities of future development be encouraged to locate within areas:

- (1) that already served by public utility
- (2) that can be expanded to accommodate additional development

In consideration of the anticipated practical limits of utility and public services, future highway improvements, existing development patterns, anticipated land needs, and the goal to conserve and preserve certain natural elements, the boundary of the Agricultural classification represents the approximate maximum extent to which urban types of services and/or development and/or the extension of public utilities within or in close proximity of this boundary should be avoided until such time that it becomes apparent that the demands for additional land can no longer be met within the other planning classifications.

Another feature of the development staging plan is the delineation of lands, which for environmental reasons, should by in large be left in a natural or semi-natural state. Therefore, the Agricultural classification has also been assigned to the floodplains of the Grand River and Crockery Creek. These areas should support only the least intensive types of development activity such as very low density residential, various recreational types of uses, farming (when properly practiced), and natural wildlife habitat.

Implementation Measures

Goals

- Preserve agricultural lands
- Protect/promote farmland in agricultural zoning districts
- Stress the importance of Agricultural Best Management Practices
- Discourage the fractionalization of farmland brought about by scattered rural housing development
- Provide for very low density development while maintaining and protecting the natural and rural character of the Township

Recommendations

- Promote the enrollment of agricultural land into the Michigan Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act (PA 116)
- Discourage large scale development within areas of agricultural land
- Encourage the majority of residential development to occur in areas less suitable for farming activities and near public services and utilities

Strategies

- Implement policies in Agricultural areas to discourage residential incursion
- Through zoning regulations, discourage residential development that does not directly serve farm families and farm workers
- Avoid the extension of water and sewer utilities within agricultural areas as a means of discouraging non-farm uses in such areas