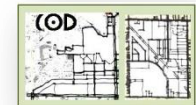


Conservation  
Oriented  
Development



PREPARED BY:  
**CITY OF KENTWOOD  
PLANNING COMMISSION &  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT**





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**BACKGROUND**

During the 2003-2005 Master Plan update process, it was recommended that two of the largest undeveloped tracts in the City of Kentwood be developed as “Conservation Oriented Development” (COD). These tracts lie in Section 13 (including the Patterson Farm, 36<sup>th</sup> Street frontage properties, and the Grooters Office PUD) and Section 34 (The area bounded by 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, Wing Avenue, 60<sup>th</sup> Street and Princeton Estates, including the Heyboer Farm).

While COD has been referred to several times in the Master Plan, what it entails, and how that can be achieved is left largely unmentioned. The two tracts of land are different in many ways, particularly with respect to location and physical characteristics. Therefore, the “COD” concept is anticipated to have commonalities and differences as they apply to the two tracts.

**PROCESS AND APPROACH**

A four-stage cyclic process is envisioned for this project: Creating a *Vision*; *Implementation* of the vision; *Monitoring* the impacts; *Evaluation and Refining* the vision from the findings.

Usually, the Master Plan serves as the principal *Vision* document for a community. Accordingly, it is anticipated that a Conservation Oriented Development Plan can be appended to either the main body of the Master Plan or as a compendium to it. *Implementation* can take effect in various ways: through amendments to the zoning and other regulatory ordinances, adoption and incentivizing of best management practices for green and sustainable developments, and careful exploration of unanticipated implementation strategies - all working in tandem towards attaining the objectives of the Conservation Oriented Development Plan. Like all good plans, this one would require constant *monitoring, evaluation and refining* in order to keep it effective and up-to-date. Putting the plan together requires active involvement of the stakeholders, the Planning Commission and the Planning staff. The role of the stakeholders and the Planning Commission is to provide their input into the development of this plan. Planning staff is responsible for putting the plan together in a form that is acceptable to the Planning Commission as well as the stakeholders.

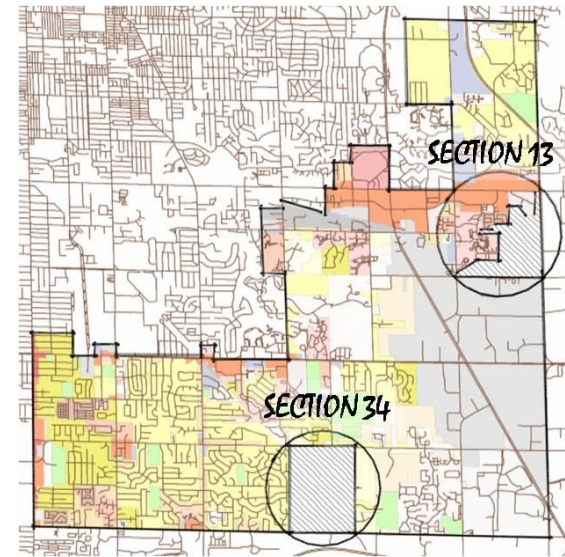


Figure 1: Areas under consideration for Conservation Oriented Development

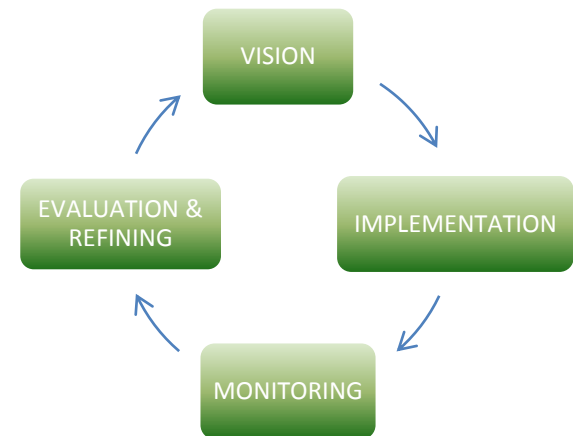
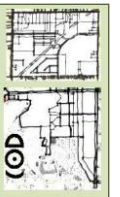


Figure 2: Process for the Conservation Oriented Development project



## PLAN DEVELOPMENT PHASES





**INPUT PHASE**

**Kick-off Meeting:** The process started off with a kick-off meeting which was held on April 25, 2006. All the stakeholders were invited to a regular meeting of the Kentwood Planning Commission where the project was introduced along with a presentation covering a brief overview of the process, general recommendations of the master plan for the areas under consideration, Kentwood Master Plan principles and some examples of conservation oriented developments.

Even though the participation was decent, the input received was very little. The general indication was that the stakeholders as well as the Planning Commission acknowledged the need for this plan and the idea of conservation and that the City should look at something unique for both these areas as they are the last remaining developable tracts in Kentwood.

**Initial feedback for developing options:** In order to gather ideas for developing initial options for the two tracts under consideration, staff developed a questionnaire for the Planning Commission. However, a section of the Commission found the questions too objective to respond to and wanted to look at graphic representations instead.

Accordingly, staff prepared a few options for each of the two sections under consideration and presented them to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commissioners, in turn, were asked to participate in a group exercise along with some stakeholders, where each group would have to come up with a development option for the tracts either modifying once of the concepts presented by staff or coming up with their own indigenous versions. Planning staff also participated in the exercise.

These group exercises were held on August 8, 2006 (For Section 13) and September 26, 2006 (Section 34). Synopses of the development options prepared by each of the groups were presented at the meeting.

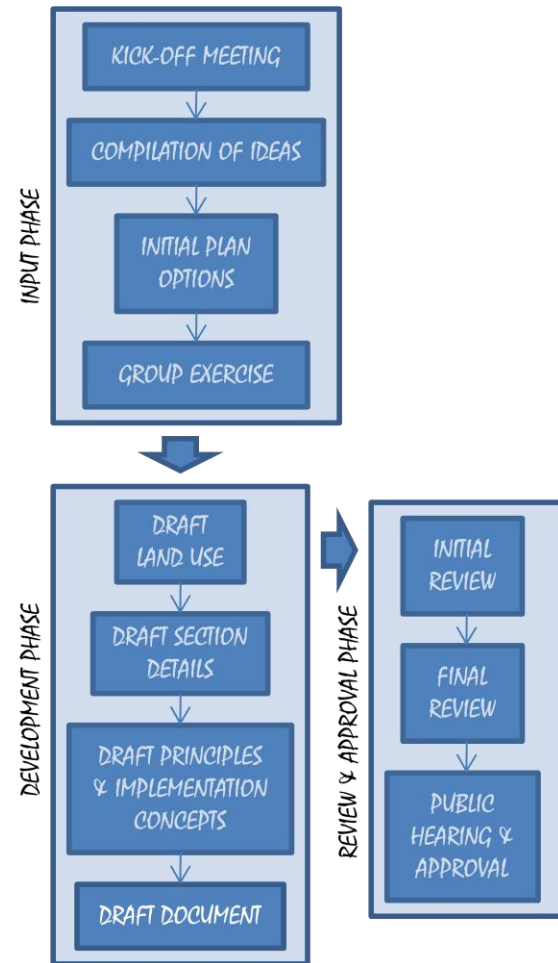


Figure 3: COD Plan development stages



## DEVELOPMENT PHASE

**Draft future land use plans:** The development options presented during the group exercises (see above) were used to come up with a draft future land use map for each of the two sections and presented to the Planning Commission for feedback. The Commission generally agreed to the concepts and suggested minor revisions, which were incorporated.

Subsequently, these drafts were discussed with the Engineering and the Parks and Recreation Department. The intent was to receive information on existing as well as planned infrastructure in these two areas.

**Approval of concepts:** Staff prepared separate recommendations for review and approval by the Planning Commission for each of the following: Core principles for the Conservation Oriented Development Plan; general land use recommendations for Sections 13 and 34; and implementation strategies (including an implementation schedule) for the Conservation Oriented Development Plan. All these concepts were reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission as of November 12, 2007.

**Conservation Oriented Development Plan:** One of the conceptual recommendations that were approved by the Planning Commission (see “Approval of concepts” above) was the creation of a Conservation Oriented Development Plan which would serve as a compendium document to the current Master Plan. This report is intended to serve that purpose documenting not only the element of the plan and their bases but also the process that led to its development and the strategies that could be adopted to implement it successfully.

## REVIEW PHASE

[The REVIEW PHASE shall be added once it has been completed]

## ADOPTION PHASE

[The ADOPTION PHASE shall be added after it has been completed]



*Figure 4: A joint meeting of the City's Planning and City Commissions was arranged to understand desirable attributes in future residential developments*



# PLAN FRAMEWORK





**EVALUATION OF THE BACKGROUND CONDITIONS: SECTION 13**

This area lies west of Patterson Avenue between 28<sup>th</sup> Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street, about 289 acres in total.

Most of the properties in this area are zoned residential including 145 acres owned by the Patterson Family and about 33 acres under independent ownership along 36<sup>th</sup> Street. Only about 5.5 acres of property under the Patterson Family ownership at the southwest corner of 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Patterson Avenue is zoned for commercial use, of which only about an acre is actually developable without any wetland mitigation. About 40 acres of property in the subject area is zoned for industrial use while Consumers Energy owns a little over 38 acres for their power line right-of-way and associated uses. A 10 acre parcel is zoned for office use, just north of the Consumers Energy right-of-way.

The City owns a 14.38 acre parcel west of the Patterson Farm, also within the area under consideration that contains a detention pond covering about 10 percent of that parcel. Thus it would be a challenge to develop this site without mitigation because the upland area is somewhat separated from the upland areas even in the adjoining parcels.

Plaster Creek meanders through the northwest portion of the old farmstead creating substantial wetland areas. The 36<sup>th</sup> Street residential properties have long narrow lots with small building foot prints. The industrial properties to the southwest include on gas station; the ones to the southeast are only slightly utilized.

One of the major developments in the recent years influencing this area has been the construction of the new interchange on 36<sup>th</sup> for I-96 about a mile-and-a-half east of this area. It is anticipated to generate additional traffic through 36<sup>th</sup> Street. In addition, this segment of 36<sup>th</sup> Street has been widened to a 5-lane road to handle the anticipated increase in traffic.

**EVALUATION OF THE BACKGROUND CONDITIONS: SECTION 34**

The area under consideration is bounded by 52<sup>nd</sup> Street to the north, Wing Avenue to the east, 60<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and Princeton Estates to the west. The total area is about 470 acres.

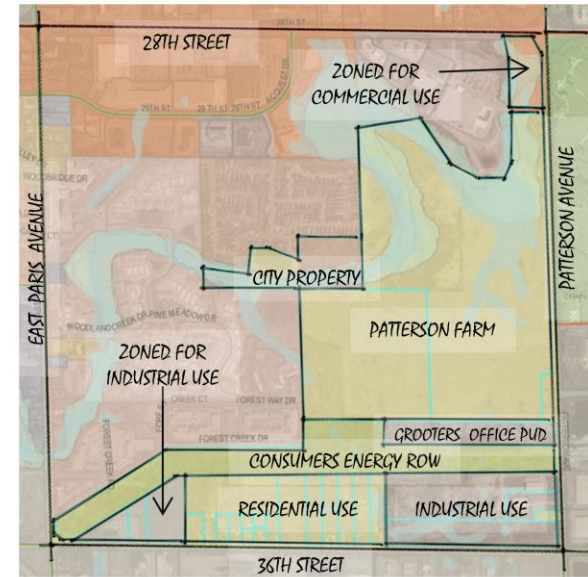


Figure 5: Area under consideration for COD in Section 13



All the properties included in the area are zoned single family residential. The southwest corner property is the Challenger Elementary School (Kentwood Public Schools). Two of the parcels near the north east corner belong to church groups. There is an approved plan for at least one of those parcels.

The Heyboer family owns about 135 acres of property in this section, all part of the Centennial Heyboer Family Farm. The farm buildings are mostly concentrated in one 1.5 acre parcel fronting on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. This farmstead is historically significant as it is the last remaining farm in Kentwood and because it has a Centennial Farm designation. Many of the buildings (or parts of it) date back to late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

CBM Investment Partners own about 102 acres of property that fronts on 60<sup>th</sup> Street. Currently the City is reviewing an application for a Residential Planned Unit Development on that Property for approximately 311 detached single family homes. Kentwood LLC owns two parcels east of the Heyboer Family Farm, totaling 60 acres. The City has not been made aware of anything definite on these parcels.

The Paul Henry Trail runs diagonally through this area. There is an approved precise plat for Breton Avenue extended that connects 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and 60<sup>th</sup> Street. The City would like to have grade-separated intersection at Breton Avenue Extended and Paul Henry trail.

### DEFINING CONSERVATION ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (COD)

As indicated before, the 2005 Master Plan Update did not specify any details for a Conservation Oriented Development (COD) that was proposed for Sections 13 and 34. Accordingly, the first step in the process was identifying attributes for such a development. In order to identify those attributes, the following steps were followed:

- Explore the master plan recommendations for graphics and/or descriptions for use types, forms and development characteristics desired in these two sections; and
- Research similar initiatives and practices elsewhere in the country;

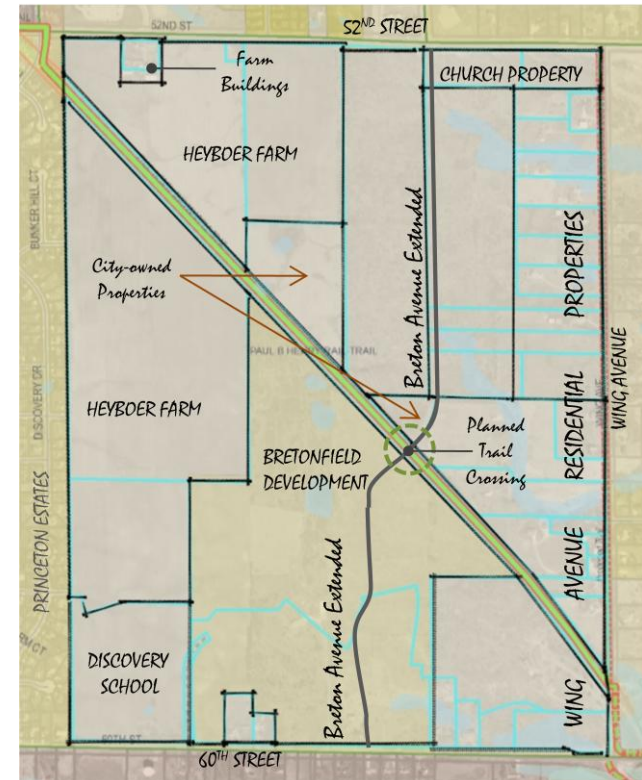


Figure 6: Area under consideration for COD in Section 34

Accordingly, several attributes were identified as integral to the vision of a COD. These attributes are built around conservation of natural features and with the intention of incorporating desired development characteristics that enhance sustainability and promote optimal use of such conserved features. These attributes are:

- Conservation of open spaces;
- Conservation of existing natural features like strands of trees, wetlands and flood plains to the extent possible
- Conservation of historic features where applicable; re-use or re-adaptive use is encouraged;
- Optimization of open space for public use;
- Promotion of green infrastructure throughout the development through parks and non-motorized trail networks with connections to amenities;
- Incorporation of “walkability” in all the developments to the extent possible;
- Clustering of developments to reduce footprints of the built environment to the extent possible;
- Requiring high quality architecture and urban design for all developments;
- Designing street layouts that focus on efficient connectivity, utility and service delivery;
- Designing street layouts and cross sections that are responsive and sensitive to the context;
- Planning for land use types that facilitate use of mixes, minimize impact on the conservation features and complementary to the development characteristics ;
- Requiring amenities like street trees, public spaces, street furniture, park furniture and public art that creates a strong sense of place for every development; and
- Wherever possible plan for transit connections

There are some caveats to the implementation of these principles:

- Economic viability;
- Sensitivity to existing ground conditions (topography, natural features, etc) ;
- Sensitivity to existing infrastructure;
- Sensitivity to existing residential areas;
- Sensitivity towards future developments; and
- Sustainability

In addition to the general attributes associated with the COD some features were desired

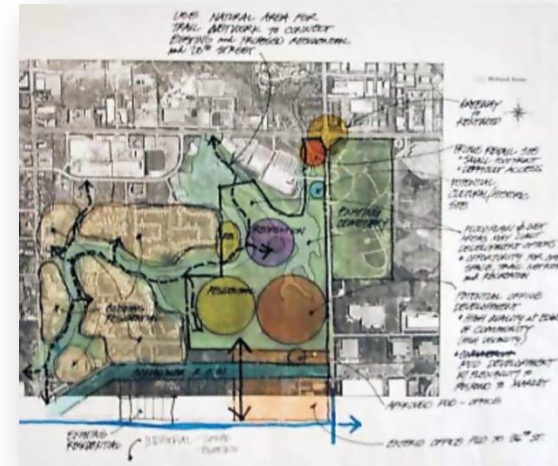


Figure 7: Concept sketch for Section 13 developed during the 2005 Master Plan update process

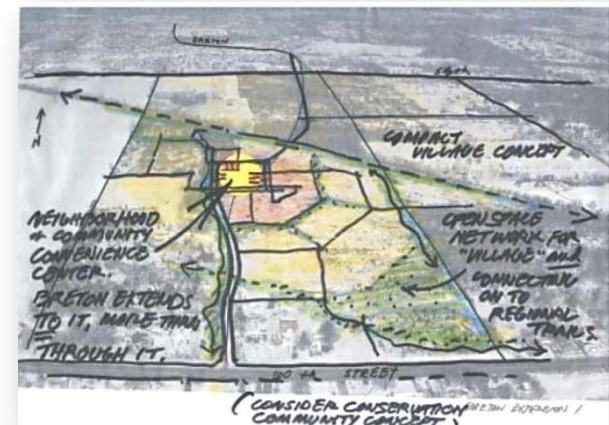


Figure 8: Concept sketch for Section 34 developed during the 2005 Master Plan update process



that were specific to each of the two subject areas.

## DESIRED FEATURES IN SECTION 13

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As far as types of uses are concerned, this section is deemed suitable for a mix of residential, commercial (office and limited retail) and hi-tech industrial uses. Also, specific characteristics were desired within each of those uses, as follows:

### ▪ Residential developments

Tenure: The general desirability is for homes that are owned, including condominium ownership. Life lease ownership, especially for senior living facilities were also acceptable.

Type of units: Detached single family homes are most desirable. Row houses and stacked condos are also acceptable.

Quality/Type of development: Mid-range compact single family developments to be mixed with high-end row houses (specifically for the front part of the 36<sup>th</sup> Street frontage properties). High-quality stacked life-lease condominiums for seniors were also acceptable)

Other attributes: The residential developments should exemplify high quality urban design and architectural characteristics.

### ▪ Commercial office developments

Type of development: Any new office developments have to be integrated with approved office PUD on Patterson Avenue just north of the Consumers Energy right-of-way, preferably in an office park setting. Low intensity retail uses can be mixed in with the predominant office use.

Other attributes: The development should exemplify high quality urban design and architectural characteristics.

### ▪ Commercial retail developments



Type of development: Except for the 5-acre parcel at the southwest corner of 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Patterson Avenue, retail uses should be low to very low intensity and only supportive to the office uses. Big-box retail developments are not acceptable at all.

Other attributes: The development should exemplify high quality urban design and architectural characteristics.

▪ **Industrial developments**

Type of development: Preferably a research and development oriented industrial use is desired.

Other attributes: The development should exemplify high quality urban design and architectural characteristics.

▪ **Other uses**

Types of development: Unique regional attraction such as an entertainment venue; an indoor/outdoor recreation center with a regional draw; a high-end hotel or resort; or, a combination of such uses.

Other attributes: The development should exemplify high quality urban design and architectural characteristics.

**DESIRED FEATURES IN SECTION 34**

As far as types of uses are concerned, this section is deemed suitable for primarily a mix of different residential uses, and possibly some commercial (retails and office) uses in a downtown or town center type development rather than a strip commercial development. Also, specific characteristics were desired within each of those uses, as follows:

▪ **Residential developments**

Tenure: The general desirability is for homes that are owned, including condominium ownership.

*A **hobby farm** is a smallholding or small farm that is maintained without expectation of being a primary source of income. Some are merely to provide some recreational land, and perhaps a few horses for the family's children. Others are managed as working farms for sideline income, or are run at an ongoing loss as a lifestyle choice by people with the means to do so. (Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hobby\\_farm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hobby_farm) )*



*Type of units:* Detached single family homes are most desirable. Row houses or residential over retail/office are also acceptable in specific cases. Hobby Farms are also recommended for parts of the Heyboer Farm, especially close to the existing farm buildings.

*Quality/Type of development:* Hi-end and mid-range compact single family developments to be mixed with some high-end row houses or residential over commercial (along Breton Avenue extended, north of the trail).

*Other attributes:* The residential developments should exemplify high quality urban design and architectural characteristics.

▪ **Commercial retail/office developments**

*Type of development:* A mix of low-intensity commercial office and retail development along Breton Avenue extended or near the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street intersection in a downtown or town center format

*Other attributes:* The development should exemplify high quality urban design and architectural characteristics.

**SUPPORTING COMPONENTS**

Besides mix and nature of uses, there are some infrastructural components that would have a bearing in the establishment of a Conservation Oriented Development in these two Sections of the city.

**Street system**

Layout, cross-section and classification of the streets should be sensitive to the context of the development. Wherever possible, streets should have good connectivity. Accommodating non-motorized traffic and possible transit routes should be a valid option wherever possible and reasonable.

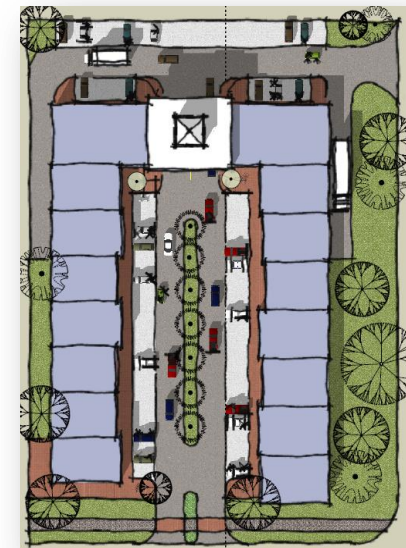


Figure 9: An example of a "Town Center" type retail



Figure 10: A "Town Center" retail development in Columbus, Ohio

**Green infrastructure**

Creating and articulating them with the natural and historic features that are worth preserving is of utmost importance. Also, all designed and built features should incorporate as well as be sensitive to green infrastructure.

**Utility infrastructure**

All use and layout options should take into account existing and future utility layouts. Accordingly future land use maps have been reviewed by the engineering department.

**Amenities**

Public amenities should be a part of every development. Amenities should include non-motorized connections within the proposed and existing uses (including schools, parks and trails); provision of bike racks at public places and uses; and, street and park furniture wherever appropriate and their convenience can be anticipated.

**Creating public spaces**

Articulated public spaces provide a community a sense of place and help sustain it. All developments in general should include public spaces within them. While retaining sensitive natural areas untouched is appreciable, there should still be some useable open spaces for public use with appropriate features like street/park furniture, gazebos, landscaping and public art.

*According to Webster's New World Dictionary, Infrastructure is defined as - "the substructure or underlying foundation, especially the basic installations and facilities on which the continuance and growth of a community or state depends". When we think of infrastructure we think of built infrastructure such as roads, electric power lines and water systems as well as social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and libraries. However, the concept of **Green Infrastructure** elevates air, land, and water to an equal footing with built infrastructure and transforms open space from "nice to have" to "must have." At the same time, green infrastructure helps frame the most efficient location for development and growth - and related gray infrastructure - ensuring that developers, citizens, and communities capture the cost advantages of location and create and protect household and community amenities.*

- From the Green Infrastructure Website at <http://www.greeninfrastructure.net/definition>

**EVALUATING IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUMENTS**

As far as implementation goes there are two parts to it: the first step is the creation of a document that outlines the intents and visions for the Conservation Oriented Development and how they may be applied to these two target areas and identifying possible instruments for their implementation; the second step is to prepare and put in place those instruments and monitor the implementation for progress and corrections.



## Appending the Master Plan

The first part, as identified, is to create a document that outlines the intent and vision for the Conservation Oriented Development framework, and how it applies to the two target areas. It also includes identifying possible implementation techniques. It is anticipated that this document shall be made a part or a compendium to the Master Plan.

## Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance, in its current form, is probably not fully equipped to allow or optimize the anticipated Conservation Oriented Development objectives. In order to ensure the same, the following are some of the possible steps:

- Create Conservation Oriented Development district
- Identify and outline Incentives for green developments (perhaps on the lines of LEED-ND, LEED Buildings, and similar best management practices)
- Allow and possibly provide incentives and encouragement for use of alternative energy (like solar, wind, geothermal energy)
- Encourage or incentivize alternative developments like cohousing, hobby farms, and cottage style developments.

## Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are probably the most fool-proof way of preserving existing natural features and tree strands short of acquiring the property. With proper incentives, conservations easements can become a very useful tool for preserving and retaining elements constituting green infrastructure.

## Implementation schedule

An implementation schedule outlining elements of the COD can be an excellent resource to ensure timely implementation. The schedule should also include monitoring plans and be flexible enough to be retuned based on developments.



**Cohousing** communities combine the advantages of private homes with the benefits of more sustainable living, including shared common facilities and ongoing connections with neighbors. These intentional neighborhoods, created and managed by residents, offer an innovative solution to today's environmental and social challenges. (Source: <http://www.cohousing.org/>)

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (**LEED**) Green Building Rating System™ encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria. (Source: US Green Building Council Website). LEED rating systems have been developed (or are being developed) for New Construction, Existing buildings, Commercial Interiors, Core & Shell, Schools, Retail Healthcare, Homes and Neighborhood Development (**LEED-ND**). For more information on the activities of the Council and LEED, refer to the USGBC website at: <http://www.usgbc.org/>

PLAN DETAILS AND  
RECOMMENDATION





**GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COD**

The general principles are derived from the intent of adopting the COD to replace the pre-2005 future land use recommendations for portions of Sections 13 and 34 (which were for a combination of Low Density and Medium Density Residential, Industrial, Commercial Office uses in Section 13 and Low Density Residential in Section 34) The following is a comprehensive list of those principles:

- Conserve open space: in-lot open space, common open space (useable as well natural open space)
- Conserve natural features like strands of trees, wetlands and flood plain
- Optimize common open space for public use (It is assumed that useable open space stands a better chance of being conserved and at providing passive/active recreation compared to in-lot open space)
- Incorporation of parks and trails at the neighborhood as well as regional level and create interconnections among them
- Create a diverse use and type mix maximizing useable open spaces and quality of development without an increase in overall density or compromising economic viability.
- Incentivize and encourage green buildings, neighborhoods and redevelopments that is responsive to the principles of the COD
- Create a strong sense of place through amenities, streetscape, walkability, innovative architecture and urban design.

Regardless of the area of application, COD developments are expected to comply with these principles

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTION 13**

The following are the approved conceptual recommendations specific to Section 13 as approved by the Planning Commission:

**In-lot Open Space:**

Pervious (green) area in a residential parcel. It is obtained by taking out the main building and accessory building footprints and driveways from the area of the parcel.

**Useable Open Space:**

Open space obtained by subtraction wetland areas from the required open space for the respective zoning districts. This does not include the in-lot open space.

**Total Open Space:**

This is the total of all pervious areas in-lot, useable as well as other (roadside green areas between the sidewalk and the pavement) open space areas.

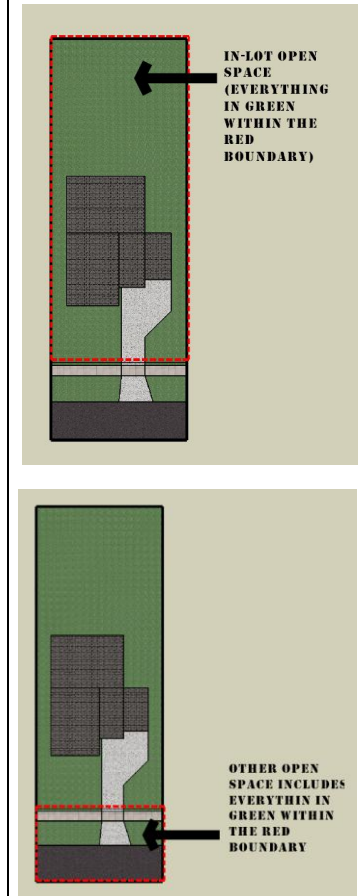


Figure 11: Different types of Open Spaces and what they entail in the context of this plan



1. **A mix of residential uses of various types and intensity north of the Consumers Energy right-of-way and east of the Woodland Creek Apartments as well as the 36<sup>th</sup> Street residential properties. Rental units are not desired in this area.**
  - i) **Middle- to high-end detached single-family residential units mixed with high-end multi-unit condominium units or row houses for the area east of Woodland Creek Apartments and north of the Consumers Energy right of way.**

Basis: This area, with the natural features in tree strands and wetlands is well suited for a quality residential development that can be complementary to the non-residential uses anticipated further east. It may not be unreasonable to check with Consumers Energy to see what their plans are with respect to the 5-acre rectangular piece that they own north of their corridor. It may be worthwhile to annex it to the residential piece if it is available.

- ii) **Residential use for the 36<sup>th</sup> Street frontage residential properties all the way up to the Consumers Energy right-of-way to the north and to the west. High-end row houses along 36<sup>th</sup> Street is deemed suitable. For the rest of the area, compact high-quality single family homes or attached condominium units are suitable. Housing facilities for the elderly may also be allowed, as long as they are owned units and are high quality.**

Basis: This area has quite a few long time residents. Even though it was master planned for industrial uses in the past, efforts to rezone the property (for industrial use) were not well received by the neighbors. The current industrial uses are restricted to three westernmost properties, and arguably, those uses may go away in the long run. Accordingly, residential use seems to be preferable and well suited, as long as access management is done prudently. Compact high quality housing can be a very good fit in this area with row housing or attached single- family condominium units along 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Single family detached along the Consumers Energy right-of-way.



2. **Commercial retail use at the southwest corner of 28<sup>th</sup> Street and Patterson Avenue not extending beyond the historic farm house to the south. As far as the farm house is concerned, it can be restored and re-used for commercial uses. Also, as outlined in the master plan update, incorporate a gateway feature in this corner.**

Basis: This location may be suited for limited commercial retail or office use. However, any bigger scale commercial entity that would have a big foot print and creating a demand for smaller commercial entity around it may challenge the preservation of open space around the existing natural features thereby defeating the objectives of the Conservation Oriented Development. Also, there access limitations associated with the corner property.

**3. A mix of low intensity commercial retail and office uses in a walkable environment at the northwest corner of 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Patterson Avenue.**

Basis: The new interchange within a mile-and-a-half of this intersection may generate enough traffic on 36<sup>th</sup> Street to warrant some commercial use at this intersection which may also benefit the planned future residential development immediately west. However, the desirability is to keep such uses limited to a relatively smaller scale (as opposed to a big box destination retail).

**4. A research center or a high tech industrial use just north of the Consumers Energy corridor on Patterson Avenue that would not stretch to far along to the north, allowing preservation of considerable open space along and south of Plaster Creek. Alternatively, a regional attraction that would meld with (without threatening) the natural features and the desired open space south of Plaster Creek. Such an attraction could be an entertainment venue, a resort, or a unique commercial entity but not regular big-box retail.**

Basis: The intent is to maximize open space that enhances the existing natural features and at the same time permitting a unique development that fits the area. The preference is to restrict the footprint of the development and still make it sustainable where it has the potential to draw enough people and accommodate them in a small footprint or have a footprint that complements and includes the existing natural features without threatening them.

**5. An indoor and/or outdoor recreation facility (a driving range, for example) can be allowed as a temporary use just north of the area where the research/hi-tech industrial/ regional attraction is planned. The temporary use can continue if it is deemed compatible with and complementary to the future developments in its vicinity as and when they develop.**



*Figure 12: Mangiamo!, Grand Rapids. An example of commercial reuse of a historic residential building*



Basis: The owners of the property have asked whether an interim use like a golf driving range would be acceptable in this property. While such a use could be acceptable in the interim, it may also be compatible with and complementary to the future residential as well as non-residential development in this area and may be desirable.

**6. Natural preserve area along and contiguous to plaster creek.**

Basis: One of the important tenets of the conservation oriented development is to retain as much contiguous open space as possible without foregoing economic feasibility. This preserve would serve that purpose. The Plaster Creek, the wetlands and the floodplains in this area are important natural features and are worth preserving. Allowing compact developments (both residential and non-residential) to the south is anticipated to make this preserve economically viable.

**7. Pocket parks to serve at the neighborhood level.**

Basis: The intent of the conservation oriented development is not only to optimize open spaces, but also to ensure that a greater portion of those open spaces are useable. Pocket parks in each neighborhood, especially in the compact housing areas could serve extremely well to provide easily accessible and useable open spaces at the neighborhood level.

**8. Extensive trail network connecting to all the amenities and the City-wide trail system (both existing and planned), other neighborhoods and the commercial centers.**

Basis: This feature would also enhance walkability and promote walking in general. Also green infrastructure is gaining increasing importance by the day, and interconnectivity of amenities is essential to the same.

**9. Develop a strong sense of place throughout this section in all the neighborhoods by:**

**i) Allow community pride signs (not generally allowed by our zoning ordinance)**



ii) **Require public art for each new development community in useable open spaces.**

iv) **Encourage appropriate and articulate roadside design. Include bike racks in roadside design.**

iii) **Establish urban design guidelines for every type of development anticipated in this area.**

Basis: The need for developing a strong sense of place has been identified in the current master plan. Placemaking is an integral part of sustainable development. All the features listed above go toward smart placemaking. Unless these features are required they will not be incorporated in new developments and the opportunity will be lost.

**10. Promote green infrastructure, green buildings and green neighborhoods through incentives and best management practices.**

Basis: All these features are essential for a district that is attributed as conservation oriented. As have been identified in numerous case studies, besides the environmental incentives, they can become excellent marketing/branding tools and add to the diversity of Kentwood's developments.

**GENERAL BASES FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The basic use recommendation and development types are built upon the following objectives that the stakeholders and the Commission wanted to achieve for this section.

TYPE OF USES: Generally, the desire is to have a mix of residential and non-residential uses in this area.

Residential uses: It was clearly indicated that rental units are not desired in this area. As far as form is concerned, a mix of ownership homes, mostly detached single family homes (compact is okay, as long as they have high quality architecture) with the rest being attached condominiums and row houses (again with high quality architecture).

With regards to the price points, there was concern regarding the demand and therefore feasibility of high-end detached single family homes. Therefore, the agreement was to go for



middle to high single family homes. However, for the condos and row houses, the inclination was to towards the higher end of the spectrum.

Commercial Uses: With regards to commercial uses, it was generally agreed that regular big-box development would not be compatible with the character of this area. Any commercial retail use would have to be low intensity and only as supportive to other non-residential and residential uses in this area. There was however consensus in allowing a unique regional attraction, if one comes along, for this area. Commercial office uses are acceptable in this area.

Industrial uses: As far as industrial uses are concerned, research and development oriented hi-tech uses were deemed acceptable in this area.

Other uses: A regional attraction like an indoor and/or outdoor entertainment facility, a resort, or a regional attraction would also be acceptable as long as such developments are sensitive to the natural features, exemplify quality architecture and are in conformance with the general COD principles.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKS: The general intent is to go with compact developments with large contiguous open spaces. The wetlands and floodplains in this area should be conserved and to the extent possible utilized with sensitivity to environmental implications. As far as residential developments are concerned, small useable open spaces for common use should be planned. Generally, any medium to large scale wetland mitigation attempts to accommodate development should be discouraged.

STREET NETWORK (INCLUDING NON MOTORIZED TRAILS): With respect to street networks, there are a few ideas that the City's Engineering Department needs to look at. These are:

- An east-west connection by extending 33<sup>rd</sup> Street west of Patterson Avenue over to Forest Creek Drive
- A north-south connection across the Consumers Energy right-of-way connecting the area north thereof to 36<sup>th</sup> Street

In addition there are other issues like traffic signal locations, midblock crossings and street cross sections that the City's Engineering Department needs to look at.



There should be trail connections to the existing and planned City-wide trail systems as well as to the amenities and within the facilities and in the vicinity of the target area.

Some details and/or minor issues like signage, incorporation of street furniture and public art, were not discussed at length during these exercises.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTION 34

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The following are the approved conceptual recommendations specific to Section 34 as approved by the Planning Commission.

1. **A mix of residential uses of various types and intensity with some commercial use near Breton Avenue and 52<sup>nd</sup> Street.**

i) **A general classification of residential use types to be defined. These classifications are as follows:**

**A. Rural:** This housing type would be somewhat different than the other urban or suburban type of residential uses. Rural housing would have two sub-types. The first one would be *Large Lot Homes* that would be similar to the existing properties on Wing Avenue, generally between 2-5 acres in size. The second one would be *Hobby Farms* that are generally 4 acres or better in size, located near the historic farmstead.

**Basis:** Majority of the Wing Avenue residents are inclined to retain Wing Avenue the way it now. In order to accomplish that, an appropriate residential classification would be required. The Large Lot Homes type addresses that. Even though farming may not actually be done in these properties, they would cater to a section of the housing market that provides opportunity to build over large parcels and put in bigger accessory buildings. Hobby Farms, on the other hand, would be an effort to retain a slice of Kentwood's agricultural history near its historic farm. While commercial farm operations would probably not occur here in the future, these properties would allow hobby farmers with little farms and community gardens in this area. There have been discussions regarding establishing a farmers' market in the City. These hobby farmers or community gardeners would have an opportunity to sell local produce in such a market, making it a unique draw in this area.



**B. Fringe Urban:** Higher end single family homes with at least 3000 sq ft of finished living areas on the main building, with additional allowances for bigger accessory buildings (for housing RVs/ Boats) or mother-in-law units. Architectural quality is a prerequisite<sup>1</sup>.

Basis: Many of Planning Commission members have indicated that Kentwood does not have housing options where families, as they grow, can move in to and have room for their RVs, boats, or even family members that can be on the same property but in a separate quarter. This fringe-urban housing type is intended to cater to that section. The location is justified since intended users would probably pay a premium for the distance from Breton Extended, 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and 60<sup>th</sup> Street and the proximity to the trail and the central park.

**C. General Urban:** High quality<sup>1</sup> detached or attached (condominium type) single family homes, 1500-2000 sq ft in finished living areas.

Basis: This is probably the segment of the housing market where there is and would be a greater demand. Also there have been discussions with a prospective applicant who intends to put in similar homes.

**D. Compact Urban:** High quality<sup>1</sup> detached single family homes, attached single family homes or row houses with 1200 sq feet or more finished living areas/dwelling unit at relatively higher density.

Basis: This housing type should provide for the lost density in the other areas without compromising on the quality of developments. Also this segment aims at the recent trend and growing demand for compact “new-urban” homes or loft apartments for people with a penchant for urban living.

ii) **Commercial use at Breton Extended and 52<sup>nd</sup> Street in either a town-center pattern or a downtown pattern (along Breton Avenue Extended, starting at 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and not crossing the trail).**



<sup>1</sup> Architectural quality implies use quality materials, attractive streetscape, variety in color and texture. In particular, how the buildings look not only from the street but also from the other properties to the side and the rear.

Basis: Mixing of uses is becoming more of a desired norm these days and is being identified as an important ingredient for livable communities. If mixing is not possible, proximity is probably the second best thing. With churches and schools close by, commercial use is probably the element absent. Downtown type commercial attracts businesses that are somewhat different from retail that go in town centers or strip shopping centers. Thus, it would alleviate concerns for direct competition with the businesses at 44<sup>th</sup> Street/Breton Avenue as well as the ones at Baileys Grove. Besides, the downtown format provides an opportunity for a true mixing of uses (residential, retail and office). Thus a property owner does not have to depend on just one of business or residential clients and thereby reducing vacancy on their property. Downtown type development promotes Walkability, and provides a unique identity to the City. The question of identity has come up again and again in the recent years. If the downtown becomes successful, there is a scope for it to grow along the other side of 52<sup>nd</sup> Street along Breton Avenue as well eventually getting closer to and tying in with the City's future municipal campus. A downtown type development would also act as a traffic calming measure for part of Breton Extended.

**2. Breton Avenue to become a minor arterial in terms of use with grade separation at Paul Henry trail.**

Basis: Kalamazoo Avenue is being rebuilt to meet the needs for the increase in traffic generated by the M-6 interchange. Wing Avenue, on the other hand serves as the sole connector between 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and 60<sup>th</sup> Street between Kalamazoo Avenue and East Paris Avenue. Breton Avenue, if built as a minor arterial, with its design speed not exceeding 35 mph can on one hand prevent excessive pressure on Kalamazoo and relieve some off Wing Avenue while on the other be a street which is not a preferred route (because of the speed limitation through regulation as well as context). Breton Avenue could become a very vibrant walkable street north of the trail (going through a downtown area) and going further south become a relatively quiet residential street with a non-motorized trail flanking it. A three-lane cross section could achieve this very well in all the use contexts that are being considered in this stretch as demonstrated in the graphics attached. One of the options represented show a two lane cross section with a median replacing the center turn lane in the proposed downtown area.

**3. Interior streets: Promote walkable neighborhoods through efficient street design, like requiring street trees above and beyond what's currently required, requiring**



**sidewalks on both sides regardless of the number of homes served by a street and adopting specific traffic calming measures. Also, require concrete rolled curbs and allow on street parking.**

Basis: Walkability has been identified as one of the more desirable features in new neighborhoods. Sidewalks and traffic calming measures ensure that the neighborhoods are in fact walkable and are safe to walk. On-street parking has proved to slow down traffic through neighborhood streets. Concrete rolled curbs are preferred by the City's Engineering Department and are also favorable if on-street parking is allowed.

#### **4. Central Park feature developed as a regional draw**

Basis: One of the intents of going for a conservation oriented development was retain as much contiguous open space as possible without foregoing economic feasibility. The "Central Park" feature fits into that plan very well. The City owned property and the trail makes this the ideal location for it. Also, if the downtown ever materializes, the park and the downtown strip could complement each other in getting a greater number of users.

#### **5. Pocket parks to serve at the neighborhood level**

Basis: The intent of the conservation oriented development is not only to optimize open spaces, but also to ensure that a greater portion of those open spaces are useable. Pocket parks in each neighborhood, especially in the compact housing areas could serve extremely well to provide easily accessible and useable open spaces at the neighborhood level.

#### **6. Extensive trail network connecting to all the amenities especially the two schools, the pocket parks and the Central Park, the Paul Henry Trail, and the commercial strip/center.**

Basis: This feature would also enhance Walkability and promote walking in general. Also green infrastructure is gaining increasing importance by the day, and interconnectivity of amenities is essential to the same.

#### **7. Develop a strong sense of place throughout all the neighborhoods by:**



- i) Allow community pride signs (Not generally allowed by our zoning ordinance)
- ii) Require public art for each new development in useable open spaces
- iii) If a downtown is established, encourage appropriate and articulate roadside design. Include bike racks in roadside design since the downtown would coincide with the non-motorized trail.
- iv) Establish urban design guidelines/ templates for every neighborhood in this section.

Basis: The need for developing a strong sense of place has been identified in the current master plan. Placemaking is an integral part of sustainable development. All the features listed above go toward smart placemaking. Unless these features are required they will not be there and the opportunity will be lost.

**8. Promote green infrastructure, green buildings and green neighborhoods through incentives and best management practices.**

Basis: All these features are essential for a district that is attributed as conservation oriented. As have been identified in numerous case studies, besides the environmental incentives, they can become excellent marketing/branding tools and add to the diversity of Kentwood's residential developments.

**GENERAL BASES FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The basic use recommendation and development types are built upon the following objectives that the stakeholders and the Commission wanted to achieve for this section.

TYPE OF USES: Generally, the desire is to be predominantly residential in nature interspersed with open spaces. A small amount of commercial use (Retail and/or office) either in a town center type or a downtown type development is desired.

Residential uses: It was clearly indicated that rental units are not desired in this area. As far as form is concerned, a mix of ownership homes, mostly detached single family homes (compact is okay, as long as they have high quality architecture) with the rest being condos



and row houses (again with high quality architecture). Also, the intent to retain the semi-rural character of the properties along Wing Avenue was generally agreed even though it was not unanimous. Hobby farm type uses close to the historic Heyboer Farm were also generally desired, the only concern being their economic viability.

With regards to the price points, there was concern regarding the demand and therefore feasibility of high-end detached single family homes. Therefore, the agreement was to go for middle to high end single family homes. However, for the condos and row houses, the inclination was to towards the higher end of the spectrum.

Commercial Uses: With regards to commercial uses, there was not much desire to have a significant amount of the same. The reasoning was the close proximity to the 44<sup>th</sup> Street businesses and also the new center going up in Bailey's Grove. There was no definite agreement on whether to go for a downtown style or a town center type development.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKS: Even though the initial intent was to go with very compact developments with vast contiguous open spaces the same could not be opted for a number of reasons: the transfer of density rights is not currently an option due to the absence of state statutes allowing the same; the presence of wetlands further makes it difficult to achieve that; the ownership of the undeveloped area and the slim likelihood of them being developed in a predictable time table was another impediment. Given that, the general direction from the Parks and Recreation department as well as stakeholders and the Planning Commission was to have one big central park area (that would be a regional draw) and to have small pockets of open spaces spread throughout the section catering to smaller neighborhoods in their respective locations.

STREET NETWORK (INCLUDING NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS): The main concern in this section was how Breton Avenue would be constructed and that was tied directly to what its purpose was going to be. The following are some of the questions that arose: Should Breton Extended become a full-fledged arterial road that connects 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and 60<sup>th</sup> Street? Should it be an alternative to Kalamazoo Avenue or should it be a low intensity residential road that provides access to the properties in Section 34? Should there be any connections between Breton Extended and Wing Avenue? Should it cross the trail or just stop short of it from either directions (North and South)? What impact would the nature of Breton Extended have on Wing Avenue, and whether or not such an impact on Wing Avenue is desired? What kind of cross section would be best to cater to the purpose that is envisioned for Breton Avenue?



The involved parties were torn on all these questions. Based on arguments discussed at the group exercise sessions and discussions with the Engineering department, it was more or less agreed that Breton Avenue should not become similar to Kalamazoo Avenue, nor should it become a very low intensity road (that does not connect 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and 60<sup>th</sup> Street) and only serves as an access to the properties in Section 34. Rather, it should be somewhere in the middle – a road that alleviates the traffic on both Wing Avenue and Kalamazoo Avenue, with moderate design speeds (35 mph or less). It should connect 52<sup>nd</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Streets and have a grade separation at the Paul Henry Trail, as recommended in the Kentwood Master Plan. Everyone agreed to have an extensive non-motorized trail network connecting the communities to the Paul Henry Trail as well as to the proposed trail along Breton Extended. Also the trails should connect to the pocket parks, the central park and the schools (Discovery Elementary on 60<sup>th</sup> Street as well as Challenger Elementary on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street).

Some details and or minor issues like signage, incorporation of street furniture and public art, were not discussed at length during these exercises.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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As of now, the only instrument at our disposal to allow COD developments would be through Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) but they may fall short in accomplishing the COD objectives to the desired extent. Accordingly, to realize CODs to the fullest extent possible the following instruments may be helpful.

- A. Adopt the COD document as a compendium to the Master Plan.
- B. Amending the Zoning Ordinance and other selected regulatory ordinances
- C. Exploring rezoning options to COD or PUD (if a separate COD district is not created)
- D. Exploring economic development instruments
- E. Exploring incentives that encourage CODS

### **A. Adopt the COD document as an official compendium to the Master Plan**

The entire COD project is currently being documented along with all analyses and findings. The document, once completed, may be formally adopted as a compendium to the Master Plan by the Planning Commission and perhaps, if so desired by the Planning Commission,



by the City Commission as well. In many ways, this document is more of a “vision” that Commissions generally agree on with respect to the study areas in Sections 13 and 34. Once that is accomplished, the other implementation instruments (see below) may be crafted and used accordingly.

## **B. Amending the Zoning Ordinance**

As mentioned earlier, the best available instrument currently at our disposal to accomplish the COD objectives would be Planned Unit Developments, which, arguably, may not be sufficient. Accordingly, the following are some of the recommendations for amending the City’s Zoning Ordinance to accomplish the COD objectives:

1. Create a new Conservation Oriented Development zoning district: The new district’s requirements can be patterned after the current Planned Unit Development Districts as follows:
  - Intent and Purpose: To be crafted from the objectives (principles) and their rationale for the COD
  - Qualifying Conditions: Location, size restrictions, contiguity (if it is considered a requirement) and any other prerequisite that can be deemed reasonable. One requirement could be that the proposal should be generally consistent with the COD Land Use recommendations.
  - No sub types are necessary (like residential, commercial, or industrial).
  - Permitted uses: Permitted uses could be derived from the Land Use Recommendation Graphics. Use-specific development requirements (like density, setbacks, lot coverage, floor area and open space requirements) could be listed along with the uses.
  - General requirements: Derived directly from the COD principles, general requirements should be stated (to the extent possible) in quantifiable terms.
  - Urban design requirements: Urban design requirements including (but not limited to) architecture, orientation, landscaping and street layouts could be listed in this section. This can also be a separate chapter if it is desired for other new developments and/or redevelopments.
  - Green Index: If the Commissions are so inclined, a green index requirement may be adopted based on best management practices for sustainable and environment-friendly design and developments. This can in effect become a separate chapter with



an ingenuous scoring system, in which case, the COD requirement may simply specify a threshold score.

- Submittal requirements (preliminary and final COD applications): This section may not be much different from PUD Site Plan submittal requirements (Section 12.09) of the current Zoning Ordinance. There may be added information required towards establishing how COD principles are met and any accompanying support materials (like studies and multimedia representations)
- Standards for approval (preliminary and final COD applications): This again may be framed similar to the PUD counterparts. A second option could be developing a scoring system (based on rating and weighting COD features and attributes). Depending on score ranges, a COD could be a staff approval or a Planning (and City) Commission approval (Thus, avoiding the procedural complexities may be an incentive for high scoring COD proposals).
- Administration: This as well may be framed similar to the PUD counterparts.

While crafting the COD regulations, attention should be paid towards achieving a balance in requirements. (For example, if the ordinance requires both large lots and significant common open space, it may not be economically feasible. One test for economic feasibility would be comparing development under current zoning of the underlying property.)

2. Amend the definitions section to include new terms and concepts used in the COD. Some of the existing terms may also require redefining based on how they are used in context of the COD.
3. Amend the landscape section to include enhanced and/or well-articulated landscape regulations primarily address COD objectives, and perhaps revise them for redevelopment and other new developments as well
4. Explore the rationale for adopting Urban Design guidelines for CODs, other new developments as well as redevelopments to further improving the quality of such developments
5. Explore the rationale for adopting “Green Index” requirement for CODs, new developments as well as redevelopments to further improving the quality of such developments
6. Explore the rationale in establishing zoning related incentives to promote Green Buildings and Green Neighborhood initiatives.



**C. Exploring rezoning options to COD or PUD (if a separate COD district is not created)**

Over the course of developing and implementing a COD district, one of the options on the table has been to possibly rezone the areas under consideration to a COD zone (subject to establishing one) through a City initiated rezoning. However, such a rezoning should have appropriate bases in its support (and perhaps stakeholder support) to withstand any legal action. Accordingly, the Commissions and staff should work closely with the City Attorney's Office if this is considered and pursued.

**D. Exploring economic development instruments**

There are economic development instruments that may be relevant to the conceptually approved land uses for Section 34. If a downtown is in fact considered and built, a Downtown Development Authority may have the ability to generate additional revenue and would also have the option of establishing a Tax Increment Financing District.

There may be funds and grants (like the Cool Cities grant) that can be pursued for partly financing such developments or at least incentivizing them. Public-private partnerships are becoming more and more common in revitalizing cities. Members from the City and Planning Commissions and perhaps representatives from the Economic Development Corporation may be able to explore such opportunities.

In Section 13, there may be an opportunity for Tax Abatement incentives (through act 198, that are already being used in our industrial zoning districts), if there is an interest for hi-tech manufacturing investment.

**E. Exploring incentives that encourage CODs**

Explore options to incentivize COD developments including expedited (and perhaps discounts in) plan reviews and building inspections.



Convincing legislators or people with influence or connections at the state to pursue legislation allowing and formalizing innovative development tools like Transfer of Density Rights and Transfer of Development Rights among private individuals or entities through the municipal mediation and administration can also go a long way.

# APPENDICES

