

**ALPINE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
April 11, 2022**

22-18 CALL TO ORDER

The Alpine Township Planning Commission held a special meeting on April 11, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Alpine Township Center, 5255 Alpine Avenue NW, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Present: Chair Steve Thome, Vice Chair Chuck Jakems, Secretary Lisa Frizzell, Dawn Swafford, Ron Cordes Tom Griswold and Gary Potter. Planner Susan Becker and recording secretary Barb Griswold were also present. Thome called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

22-19 DISCUSSION: 2022 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Planning Consultants Chris Khorey and James Kilborn from McKenna, along with Har Ye Kan from HYK Consulting gave a recap of the Master Plan update process, gave a presentation of the draft housing study, shared possible Future Land Use designation changes and presented the proposed Alpine-Cordes Subarea Plan.

Ms. Kan gave a review of the proposed Alpine-Cordes Subarea Plan. The plan involves two areas; Alpine Avenue--Lamoreaux Drive and Henze Street—Cordes Avenue. The Alpine Avenue and Lamoreaux Drive has topography that is a challenge for the Lamoreaux Drive extension and the service drive extension parallel to M-37. A shift in the Lamoreaux Drive extension would require realignment and an adjustment in traffic signals, adding to the cost of the undertaking. There is an opportunity to go behind the vacant Art Van building, though it is challenged by the lack of visibility. The preference would be for senior housing development or residential condo development; multi-family apartments are not preferred. There is interest in a convenience store and gas station at this intersection.

Ms. Kan said the preference for the Henze Street and Cordes Avenue area is to preserve the serenity, privacy from the trees and vegetative screening, as well as the agricultural character of Cordes Avenue. There is opportunity for civic and public programming such as a senior center, library, community gardens, playground and a park. There are concerns about the development along 4 Mile Road increasing traffic along Cordes Avenue, the lack of a signalized intersection at Cordes Avenue and Henze Street, and the slippery conditions at Henze Street in the winter given the grade changes.

The Alpine-Cordes Subarea Plan could be a place where future growth and development is balanced with the preservation of productive farm lands and nature. It could be a bridge blending community focus and agricultural activities with a strong, visible commercial corridor. It could also create a buffer with calm, safe and friendly neighborhoods and pockets for recreation and respite.

Ms. Kan said the mixed use node at 4 Mile Road could complete the commercial corridor frontage along 4 Mile Road and provide a variety of mixed use and housing types to optimize the redevelopment opportunities. This area could be a shared sense of space with commercial and residential for a live-work development.

Mr. Khorey gave a review of the housing analysis and described the demand for housing units in the Greater Grand Rapids Area, with a focus on Alpine Township. The study featured several areas of analysis including demographic trends that impact the housing market, overall supply and demand for housing, projection of the population to 2030 and 2040, and the build-out analysis of the Future Land Use map.

Mr. Khorey said housing markets do not stop at municipal borders. When households seek housing in the Alpine Township area, they do not look solely within Alpine Township, or any other specific community. The geographic extent of the housing market is more realistically the area where someone can live and comfortably commute into Alpine Township.

Mr. Khorey explained McKenna used a Cohort-Component Population Projection to project the population in the future. The Cohort-Component Analysis predicted a Township population of 15,118 people, compared to an actual population of 14,079 in 2020. Therefore, the analysis estimates a net loss of 1,039 people from the Township, who would otherwise be living here if they had not moved away. Between 2010 and 2020, Alpine Township had an outgoing -6.9% net migration rate.

The reason for that loss is likely the large number of rental apartments in the Township; the York Creek Apartment community is referred to locally as "everyone's first apartment". It appears when residents reach home buying age, they move to other communities, possibly due to lack of supply in Alpine Township.

Alpine Township could reduce its out-migration by constructing more housing intended for homeownership. The Township offers good schools, affordable housing and a rural character combined with the convenience of a metropolitan region. It could be popular for first-time homebuyers moving out of the Township's rental housing, as well as other potential new residents.

Mr. Khorey stated around two-thirds of the Township's housing stock was built between 1960 and 2000, during a booming period for housing growth regionally and nationally. Since the 1960s, the demand for increased energy efficient homes and additional amenities has increased. Older homes tend to lack the features that support barrier free access and may be unsuitable for aging in place without significant remodeling or other reinvestment into the home or property.

A majority of the housing in Alpine Township is not single family homes and that is highly unusual for a community in Michigan, and the Greater Grand Rapids Area, where nearly two-thirds of housing units are single family homes. Over 28% of the Township's housing stock is in "Large Multi-Family" buildings. The lack of both single family homes and townhomes/duplexes contributes to the out-migration and lack of options for homebuyers, particularly first time homebuyers who may be interested in duplex, townhomes or other condominium unit to get into the housing market.

Mr. Khorey said the purpose of projecting housing demand in 10 and 20 year increments is to understand the impact of the housing market on Township policy over a long time. The Master Plan is a forward-looking document with a 20-year time horizon. Young people continue to move out of the Township when they reach homeownership age. However, because the "Zoomer" generation and the generation after it are smaller than the "Millennial" generation,