

**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,

there will be fewer 20-somethings to move into apartments in the future. It will lead to more people in their 30s, 40s and 50s looking for home ownership and the Township may experience landlords looking to convert existing rental units into condominiums.

The Township must manage rapid growth while still protecting its agricultural community. An influx of homebuyers would create very high demand for new homeownership units, but the inevitable decline in young adults will continue to erode rental demand.

In order to determine whether the Township has planned for an appropriate amount of housing and inform policy decisions related to planning and zoning, a build-out analysis of the Future Land Use Map was done. The build-out analysis was conducted using the following steps:

- Identifying undeveloped and underdeveloped parcels that are planned for housing on the Future Land Use Map. "Underdeveloped" parcels were defined on those that have a current active non-agricultural use but are well below the maximum permitted housing density permitted, and thus may be attractive for redevelopment.
- Determining the number of acres available on undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels within each Future Land Use category.
- Calculating the maximum number of housing units that could be built within each Future Land Use category, based on the maximum density. 20% of the total acreage was removed from each category to account for infrastructure, open space, drainage, and other non-housing site features.

The buildout analysis concludes that the Future Land Use Plan would allow for 5,609 new housing units. Given that there are 6,509 housing units in the Township, the Future Land Use Plan calls for housing to increase by approximately 34% to a full-build out capacity of 9,917 housing units.

Under all of those scenarios, even the "extreme growth" stress test, the Township has planned for plenty of housing, even while keeping much of the fruit ridge area planned for Agricultural Preservation. Further, there is little to no reason at this time to increase the acreage planned for housing, or the density of housing permitted on that acreage. Both are sufficient, per this analysis, to provide the necessary homes to accommodate growth, under a wide range of potential futures.

This analysis should not be interpreted to suggest that the Township should decrease the amount of land planned for housing, or the envisioned housing density. Additionally, although there is no need to increase planned density, new housing should not be exclusively single family homes. There is a clear need for homeownership products that are attainable for first-time homebuyers, which will likely include townhomes, duplexes, and condominiums. By developing these housing types via Planned Unit Developments that do not exceed 3.5 units per acre, the Township provides attainable housing, reduce out-migration, increase its homeowner base and preserve natural and agricultural land, all at the same time.

There were questions for the audience members regarding the following:

Who wants Lamoreaux Drive extended? Mr. Khorey answered the extension of Lamoreaux Drive has been talked about in Master Plans for several decades.

Why does potential housing have to be entry level housing? Mr. Khorey answered most 1st time home buyers can't afford \$300,000 plus housing and brand new homes on 1.5 acres or more are more costly. A condo or townhouse might sell closer to a 1st time homebuyer's price range.

If Alpine Township tries to grow at the same rate as City of Walker or Plainfield Township, the farm land won't last. Mr. Khorey responded a big part of the Township will still be planned and zoned Agricultural. He doesn't think Alpine Township will ever grow like the City of Walker, Plainfield Township or surrounding areas.

A housing development has been approved and another one has a potential of development, adding 500 to 600 units in the Township, those numbers need to be in your housing calculations. Mr. Khorey said they can factor those developments into future numbers.

Why does the Township need more housing? There are more apartments and mobile homes that we need currently. Mr. Khorey answered as the region does grow, there will be some need for housing. He added they actually reduced the housing density on the proposed Master Plan.

What are the survey results? Mr. Khorey said the compiled results and responses can be viewed at alpinetwpplan.com.

Mr. Khorey said for the next draft they will look into the following:

- Make sure that potential Future Land Use map reflects all current zoning
- Confirm feasibility of development between Cordes Avenue and Alpine Avenue
- Not looking at the northern regions of the Township for housing development because of wetlands
- Revise calculations of RA zoning
- Add in recent and proposed developments into the housing study
- Look into possibility of expanding medium residential category in areas that is appropriate
- Look at the area between 6 Mile Road, Baumhoff Avenue, Cordes Avenue and 4 Mile Road for a housing stand point. They will view it two ways, one as zoned Agricultural and one as zoned Rural Agricultural
- Rezoning of Alpine Golf Course at Alpine Avenue and 7 Mile Road

22-20 PUBLIC COMMENT

Rob Steffens, 4244 13 Mile Road, Sparta said he is not a resident, but is a land owner in Alpine Township. He stated it is a tough job being a Planning Commissioner or Township Board member sometimes. Alpine Township is unique, as well as Sparta Township and thinks both can coincide together. There are areas such as Rockford, Caledonia and Tallmadge Township that are growing at a rapid rate and not setting themselves up for the future of agricultural.

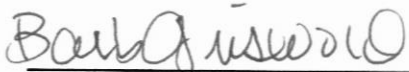
ADJOURNMENT

Frizzell motioned, supported by Griswold to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 PM.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0 Motion carried



Lisa Frizzell, Planning Commission Secretary



Barb Griswold, Recording Secretary