

NORTH ZEEB ROAD TASK FORCE

A Study of the
Washtenaw County Road Commission
Yard One – PUD
and
North Town Center
Concept

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented to
Washtenaw County Board of Road Commissioners

September 5, 2006

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NORTH ZEEB ROAD TASK FORCE

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A Study of the Washtenaw County Road Commission Yard One – PUD and “North Town Center” Concepts

I. INTRODUCTION

Since April 2006, the North Zeeb Road Task Force has been collaborating with Road Commission staff, consultants, township officials and area residents to obtain feedback on various land use options for the Road Commission’s vacant property in Scio Township. The Road Commission began pursuing plans for its property approximately seven years ago, to anticipate the agency’s future growth and space needs. Today, the Road Commission faces critical decisions in the near future to address the deterioration of its existing facilities.

The Road Commission is considering sale or lease of its vacant property as one means of addressing the need to increase revenue. The Task Force was created when the Road Commission’s development proposal for a Costco store in the southeast corner of the property received a negative reaction from some Scio Township neighbors. The Road Commission has asked the Task Force to help in defining a “Town Center,” which is called for in the Scio Township Master Plan.

The eight (8) North Zeeb Road Task Force members include:

Marty Mayo	Chair/Scio Township Planning Commission
Richard DeLong	Executive Director/Scio Township DDA
Tony VanDerworp	Executive Director/Washtenaw County Planning & Environment
Douglas Fuller	Scio Township Resident
Janet Kreiling	Scio Township Resident
David Read	Scio Township Resident
Carter Strothman	Scio Township Resident
Mona Walz	Scio Township Resident

Washtenaw County Road Commission Vice Chairman Tim Eder served as an ex-officio member of the task force and facilitated its meetings.

The Task Force members thank the Board of County Road Commissioners for its willingness to work with the community throughout the planning process for the proposed site development, and we acknowledge the Road Commission staff and consultants who provided their expertise, support and resources to our members. With their assistance, we have identified in this report factors and recommendations that we believe the Board should take into consideration as the agency plans for the future use of its property on North Zeeb Road, and as it prepares a submission of a proposal to the Scio Township Planning Commission.

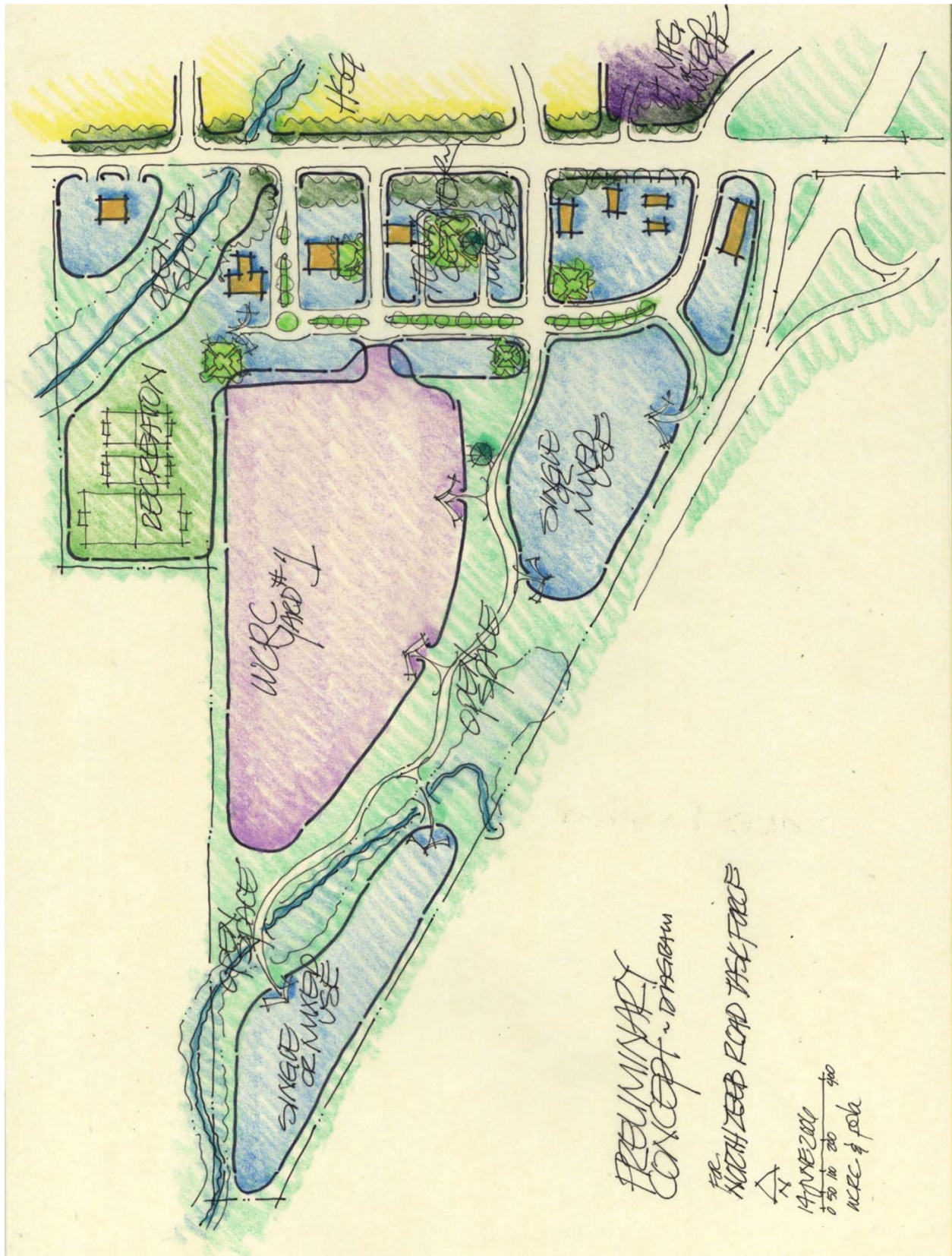
The property in question lies at one of the last undeveloped highway intersections in the Ann Arbor area. As such, it is valuable property. In considering its future growth and current facility needs, the Road Commission has determined that it will require approximately 40 of its 100 acres in the next 20 years for its own development and that the remaining 60 acres could be sold and/or leased. While the development of this property offers a means by which the Road Commission can address a portion of its revenue needs, it also provides the agency with the opportunity to work with the township to create a unique “sense of place” in Scio Township and Washtenaw County.

It is clear that development will occur in this quadrant in the future. The question is *'how will it be developed?'* The property lies at the very center of Scio Township; as such, it represents a significant opportunity for Scio Township to define the character of the community, to plan for future development and growth of the area, and to identify the activities that could take place in a North Town Center.

In the discussions among the Task Force members, meetings with the public, area residents and township officials, opinions and ideas differed greatly as to what should be included in a "Town Center," and/or how densely built-out the development should be. Though it has proved difficult to define exactly what a Town Center should be comprised of, the Task Force agrees that the *"conceptual goal"* to create a *gathering place* and *sense of identity* for Scio Township should be a key, driving influence.

A Preliminary Land Use Concept, designed by consultant Peter Pollack, is presented in **Figure A** on the following page. The Task Force offers this drawing as a good conceptual framework that allows for development of the Road Commission's facilities, and sale or lease of excess portions. This drawing allows sufficient flexibility for the creation of a Town Center that could support a mix of government, civic, commercial, retail and office uses. While this drawing is not intended to be specific or limiting, it is presented as a viable plan for further consideration and negotiation between Scio Township and the Road Commission.

FIGURE A. Preliminary Land Use Concept



II. PURPOSE

The North Zeeb Road Task Force was convened by the Road Commission to provide guidance as it prepares its revised Yard One Planned Unit Development (PUD) proposal for resubmission to Scio Township for consideration. The Task Force was asked to assist the Road Commission in defining development opportunities that meet its needs for revenue generation, and to provide guidance on development that will help Scio Township define its goals of developing the area as a North Town Center. The Task Force also provided guidance and assistance on outreach to the broader public.

An outline of the Goals and Objectives of the North Zeeb Road Task Force is provided below:

Task Force Goals & Objectives

Goal: To assist the Road Commission in soliciting public input and evaluating the major concerns and valid ideas that may be incorporated into a revised Yard One PUD plan and a North Town Center development.

Objectives:

- a. Evaluate advantages and liabilities of the current Yard One PUD
- b. Identify what attributes encompass a "Town Center" (i.e., what specific characteristics should a civic Town Center include?)
- c. Determine how to implement the Township Master Plan goals into the Yard One PUD and a North Town Center
- d. Identify ways in which to incorporate the "green space" concept in the plan

Goal: Assure that the "Town Center" concept is financially sustainable.

Objectives:

- a. Establish preliminary costs associated with creating a North Town Center
- b. Identify potential revenue sources
- c. Develop a plan to attract viable and welcome revenue sources to invest in the North Town Center concept

Goal: To establish an effective Public Engagement process for the Yard One PUD and North Town Center development

Objectives:

- a. Obtain input from current business owners, and secure their participation and support of the Yard One PUD development and a North Town Center
- b. Host two (2) additional Open Houses to obtain ideas and input from stakeholders and citizens
- c. Periodically meet with township officials at the Planning Commission and Board level to solicit input and concerns.
- d. Review the Yard One PUD proposals and provide recommendations to Board of County Road Commissioners

III. PROCESS

A. North Zeeb Road Task Force Meetings

The NZR Task Force has met every other week since April 13, 2006. Ten meetings were conducted at the Washtenaw County Road Commission office. Meeting notes summarizing the discussions at these meetings are included under **Appendix A**.

B. Community Forums

Two Community Forums were held to update the public on the work accomplished by the North Zeeb Road Task Force, Road Commission staff and consultants:

- May 25, 2006, held at the Mill Creek Middle School, Dexter, Michigan
- July 27, 2006, held at the Road Commission, 555 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor

Copies of the slide presentations and Town Center concept matrix provided during the meetings, as well as summaries of the comments heard from the public are included under **Appendix B**.

C. Meetings with Township Officials

A joint meeting was held on June 21, 2006, with the Road Commission, the Scio Township Board of Trustees and the Scio Township Planning Commission, at the township offices on North Zeeb Road. Several North Zeeb Road Task Force members were in the audience, as well as a number of area residents. A presentation on the work of the Task Force to date was made by Road Commission representatives, Peter Pollack of Pollack Design Associates and Greg Van Kirk, with the commercial real estate section of Plante & Moran CRESA. A copy of the slide presentation and a summary of the comments expressed by some of the township officials, Task Force members and the general public are included under **Appendix C**.

D. Consultant Input

Three consultants, Peter Pollack, of Pollack Design Associates; Greg Van Kirk, with Plante & Moran CRESA; and Peter Allen, of Peter Allen & Associates, worked with the Task Force to assist in identifying viable development options for the Road Commission's vacant land, as well as the North Town Center.

- Peter Pollack designed and explained illustrations of various land use options and Town Center concepts.
- Greg Van Kirk provided and explained information on Scio Township and countywide demographics, as well as lending his guidance and advice to the Task Force on the economic aspects and viability of various types of land uses.
- Peter Allen presented a financial analysis and assessment of the market viability of the project.

E. Other Participants

Dr. Larry Noodén, Professor Emeritus of Biology, University of Michigan, provided a report on the environmental features found on the Road Commission property, and reported on tours of the property conducted by the Michigan Botanical Society.

Other Road Commission staff who presented information and support to the Task Force included:

- Steve Puuri, Managing Director Provided site info & background on WCRC property
- Frank Del Vecchio, ROW Supervisor Provided site info & background on Costco
- Brian Shorkey, Transportation Planner Provided planning support
- Brent Schlack, Traffic & Safety Supervisor Provided traffic impact analysis
- Cynthia Redinger, Traffic & Safety Engineer Provided traffic impact analysis
- Val Cooper, Public Info/Community Relations Officer Meeting Organization & Materials

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and recommendations below reflect consensus views of the North Zeeb Road Task Force members.

A. Considerations for the Future of Yard One

The Road Commission began to review the development options to utilize the property containing Yard One to address its current facility needs, to plan for future growth and to increase its revenues. It should be clear that no development will, within a short period of time – less than five years – yield any significant income. This is a process that will take some time, and which has the potential to be of significant benefit to the citizens of Washtenaw County 50 or more years in the future.

Replacing of the existing shops/facilities should be examined against future needs. The Road Commission has developed a particular method of operations during the past four decades due to the location and concentration of its operations. This is an excellent time to look very hard and clearly at the operational needs of the next four or five decades. It is entirely possible that the current model of concentrated facilities may not be what will deliver the most value to the citizens/taxpayers in 2050. There are certainly models in similar organizations that use decentralized facilities, spread across the geographic service area. It is also possible that the continuation of centralized facilities is the most efficient and desirable. The Road Commission staff presented a preliminary assessment of the costs and benefits of staying at its current location, versus relocating. While this preliminary assessment makes the case for staying, it is simply not possible with available information to draw a definitive conclusion that this will remain the best course of action for the Road Commission in the future. Much will depend on zoning, land values and development trends in the area in the future. It is possible that in 15 years, the land could become so valuable that moving its yard and equipment – perhaps keeping administrative functions at the current location – could make financial sense.

The Road Commission should solicit proposals for development partners that are able to demonstrate the ability to work with concerns that have been clearly defined by area residents and governmental agencies. There certainly are many models available within the local area of partnerships between public agencies and private entities. The structure of these agreements needs careful, thoughtful and public review. It has been made clear that trying to force a plan past the Scio Township Planning Commission and administration is not in the Road Commission's best interest. An experienced developer, with strong ties to the community, would have the capability to guide any proposed development through what will certainly be a helpful, informative, lengthy and profitable process. Attached is the internally conducted Relocation Study that was submitted to the Task Force by Road Commission staff in July 2006. (See *Appendix D.*)

B. Scio Township Demographics

Scio Township and the surrounding area is a growing pocket of highly educated, wealthy families. Many have located within the area because of high-paying, professional opportunities in the Ann Arbor area. Overall, however, the population density within a five-mile radius of the Zeeb Road/I-94 interchange is low.

The township's population is about 19,500 residents, comprising some 7,500 households in a mixture of low-density suburban and rural neighborhoods. About two-thirds employed residents work in white-collar jobs, and the average annual household income within the township is about \$100,000, more than one-third higher than the average for Washtenaw County overall. The typical township family spends about \$58,000 on basic consumer goods, compared to \$49,000 across the county, and has disposable income of \$1,116 per month, compared to \$653

countywide. Scio Township's population is highly educated, with over 60 percent having a four-year college or graduate degree, again higher than the county.

Consultant Plante & Moran CRESA examined the number of homes – “rooftops” – within two radii – 1.3 and 5 miles. The latter was chosen as a maximum because most consumers typically drive a maximum of 5 miles to run errands. That radius includes some 60,000 residents, a low density. Thus, while Scio Township residents and many of their neighbors have a good deal of discretionary income, there are relatively few of them. It is Plant Moran's conclusion that any profitable development of the Road Commission's site would need a major facility that would draw people from a much wider area. *(The demographic information provided by Plante & Moran CRESA is included as **Appendix E.**)*

C. Scio Township Downtown Development Authority

Much of the property the Road Commission intends to develop lies within the boundaries of the Scio Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA), for which the DDA collects tax increment revenues. Therefore, in addition to Scio Township, the DDA has an interest in the property, as any developments on the land would generate tax revenues for the DDA. *(See attached map of the DDA boundaries under **Appendix F.**)* It was further noted that there is another line within the location of the Road Commission vacant property, that being, the Urban Service Sewer District, which extends as a conceptual boundary for the sewer lines. The Scio Township DDA is currently working on a revised Downtown Development Plan. Attached is a copy of Table 4. Development Area Plan, Estimated Costs and Time of Completion, located on pages 19-28 in the latest Draft DDA Plan, dated July 2006. *(See **Appendix G.**)*

The Scio Township DDA Board of Directors supported the plan for a PUD that included Costco. Since it is unlikely that the original plan will be resubmitted, and if it were to be, it is extremely doubtful that the Planning Commission would approve it, it is also unlikely that the Scio Township Board would override the Planning Commission.

Therefore, in the best interests of the Road Commission, Scio Township and the DDA, the Board of the DDA believes that a development specialist should be selected by the Road Commission through the preparation of a request for proposals (RFP). The request should emphasize that development should provide the best financial return for the Road Commission, Scio Township and the DDA, while respecting the environmental, recreational and civic considerations suggested in other sections of this document.

D. Environmental Attributes of WCRC Property

The site in question is unique in that it lies at the heart of a growing township and western Washtenaw County, is located at a major interchange with I-94 (including 3,200+ feet of interstate frontage) and yet has sections that have been untouched for 60 years or more. Consequently, the western third of the property has a forested area with many mature, landmark trees, a wetland, and dry, grassy areas. In addition, a ridge runs through the site providing an area of steep relief. The on-site wetland is connected to an off-site wetland area and to a more comprehensive stream system (Honey Creek). The wooded area has several species of oak, including shingle oak (rare for Michigan), numerous outstanding mature white oak, as well as very good examples of cherry and hickory (both shagbark and pignut). There are also several examples of hazelnut and a wide variety of native plants, including bloodroot, spring beauty, jack-in-the-pulpit, mayapple and woodland sedges. While these species are not particularly rare or endangered, they are indicators of a well-established, mature and healthy ecosystem. Adding to that complex, interdependent fabric is a well-established colony of red tailed hawks, as well as red-bellied woodpeckers, owls and coyotes, all indicating a very high quality community.

This area, approximately 35 acres, is comprised of all or part of Parcels H-08-21-100-009, H-08-21-100-011, H-08-21-100-012, and H-08-21-200-001. In order to protect this area, the Task Force recommends that the natural surroundings (wetlands, creek and mature trees) located on the western portion of the Road Commission's property be designated and protected as "open space." We recommend that protection of the property be ensured in perpetuity, either through deeding the land to an agency such as Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation, or through a legally binding agreement with the Township. The Task Force did not reach consensus on whether the property at the extreme western end of the triangle that is high and dry should ever be developed, but did agree that extreme care in protecting the wetlands would be required to access the property.

Additionally, we urge that Road Commission to provide public access to the area and that an area for a trailhead and signage be accommodated. The preservation of this site is important for a number of reasons, including groundwater recharge, air pollution mitigation, noise abatement, and pastoral views. The latter is particularly important, as the area is visible from the interstate to all passersby on their way into Ann Arbor and the rest of Washtenaw County. The presence of a preserved area in such a prominent location will set the expectations of visitors to the area. By maintaining a greenbelt along the interstate frontage, the preserved site can also act as an air and noise pollution buffer to the adjacent neighborhoods. An area of open space and protection of environmental values are among the key concepts called for in the Scio Township Master Plan. The presence of a preserve will enhance the value of any development that is undertaken on the rest of the site, and will add to the "walkability" of the site, a trait that the Task Force and Scio Township officials have identified as an important aspect in future development.

When development is undertaken on the unpreserved area of the site, the Task Force requests that the following concepts be incorporated into the development plans in addition to preserving the natural features noted above:

1. Bio-management of water runoff (i. e.: the implementation of rain gardens, bio-swales and other Best Management Practices, as defined by Scio Township)
2. The use of "green-roof" technology (i.e.: roofs that are covered with living plants selected for their adaptability for this environment). The use of green roofs can:
 - a. Retain rainwater, thereby reducing the requirement for drainage ponds in business parks and minimizing storm drain requirements. Depending on the weather patterns, up to 90% of an area's typical rainfall can be absorbed by a green roof
 - b. Reduce the surface temperature of a roofing membrane significantly, up to 40 degrees Fahrenheit on hot sunny days. As a result, life expectancy of the membrane can reasonably be expected to double
 - c. Cool the roof and surrounding air significantly by respirating the retained water
 - d. Provide substantial noise insulation
3. The use of permeable materials for parking and sidewalk areas to reduce stormwater runoff.
4. Work with Scio Township to encourage incorporation of some or all of the existing Osage orange tree line into the green space design of the overall development plan. (These trees are not part of the Road Commission property.) While not native to Michigan, these trees are a vestige of the farming activities that took place on this site in the past and have both historic and natural interest.

5. Work with Scio Township to designate a greenbelt along the northern boundary of the development to act as a northern boundary for development and a buffer for the neighboring areas.

Any development that is undertaken on this site should be carefully considered with respect to the affect it will have on Scio Township's future. The residents of the township have expressed their desire to maintain green space, (the recent passage of Proposal J), and to control development, (the election of the current Scio Township Board). This should be kept in mind as plans for this site are formulated. In addition, there is a suspicion in the community that the site in question may have some amount of underground pollution. It is felt that this is the underlying reason development of the site is being pursued with such determination and haste. The Road Commission should alleviate these concerns.

E. Land Use Considerations and Options

The Task Force reviewed a variety of schematic drawings prepared by Peter Pollack. While not recommending a particular configuration, the Task Force offers a number of findings and recommendations to guide the Road Commission. These recommendations are applicable to the drawing shown as **Figure A** on page three.

It is noted that much of the Road Commission property is high and dry. The area in between includes a creek, a wetland and mature trees that should be off-limits to development. The following key points were discussed by the Task Force and identified as important land use considerations and options:

Context:

1. The I-94 interchange at Zeeb Road is an entry point into Scio Township, and could be designed/constructed to signify that role.
2. There are four (4) quadrants to the Zeeb Road/Jackson Road intersection, and North Zeeb Road has two (2) large parcels to consider: The Road Commission's 100 acres and National Archive Publishing Company's 75 acres, in addition to the township's 26 acres; all should be considered as Scio Township and Road Commission move forward in plans involving a Town Center.
3. Existing land uses served/accessed by North Zeeb Road include retail, office and manufacturing, governmental offices, residences, and a Road Commission work yard.
4. Major improvements in non-motorized transportation, i.e., sidewalks, bike paths and bike lanes, are needed.
5. The many branches of Honey Creek present an opportunity for a greenway.

Site Specific Opportunities:

1. All existing buildings (private & public) and activities now fronting North Zeeb Road should become part of and physically connected/reoriented to the mixed-use Town Center.
2. Zeeb Road's role is/should remain an arterial roadway for multi-modal transportation.
3. Town Center Boulevard (a/k/a central service drive) – a new north-south roadway approximately 600-feet west of North Zeeb Road – is the primary local, traffic/Town Center access street. It can be connected to North Zeeb Road at the westbound I-94 exit ramp and at Stonegate Street.

4. Mixed-use activities occupy the parcels formed by the new north-south and east-west streets and driveways. A commercial/retail emphasis within mixed uses is suggested for the southern quadrants, consistent with the existing stores in this area; a public service/governmental emphasis for the northern quadrant; and a balanced blend of mixed-use activities in the central section.
5. The character and qualities of the Town Center's boulevard, streets and drives should include generous sidewalks and bike lanes, street trees, on-street parking and/or below ground parking decks, ground level retail in appropriate locations, and design that minimizes the presence of any off-street, surface parking lots in order to convey the dominance of people over cars.
6. An overall open space system/network should build upon the tree-lined sidewalks and can include several town squares, courtyards and gardens, and connections to the Honeycreek Greenway, as well as to the east across North Zeeb Road.
7. Road Commission Yard One activities should be fenced and buffered, and outdoor activities, movement patterns and storage areas organized, so as to minimally impact its neighbors.
8. The architecture can be dominantly three stories above grade; and, possibly taller in appropriate locations for visual emphasis and, along with its town squares, communicate the importance of the North Zeeb Road location within the township.
9. The dominant, landscape/site character should be tree-lined, active streets and gardens ~ a part of the Scio Township community-setting equal to the quality of the adjacent natural landscape.

Additional guidance and points of emphasis include the following:

The Town Center: As noted in the introduction of this report, the concept of a "Town Center" carries numerous connotations; everything from a central town-like meeting place that would require a densely constructed area, to an area that would encompass only a few sought after commodities. Questions as to whether a Town Center should even be built and/or is needed have been asked by township officials and residents. Views at public meetings have ranged from do nothing "we don't need a Town Center; we have Dexter," to "bring back Costco." The Task Force is clear that a typical highway interchange development pattern, dominated by big box retail and national franchise outlets and designed to serve an auto-centered shopping experience, is not consistent with its vision for the creation of Scio's Town Center.

The Task Force identified a number of activities that could be included in the Town Center and determined that virtually all of these uses and activities could be viable, depending upon the market, the success of any development and the strength of the public-private partnership. The Task Force members offer various suggestions that could encompass a Town Center concept, as follows:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • School | • Hospital | • Mixed Income Housing |
| • Senior Center | • U of M Medical Facilities | • Residential (high density uses) |
| • Washtenaw County Parks | • Ice Rink | • Post Office |
| • Library (new Ann Arbor library?) | • Office Space | • Records Administration |
| • WCC Western Center | • Walking/Bike Paths | • Social Security Office |
| • Community/Civic Center | • Arts Center | • Other Federal Govt. uses |
| • Recreation Center | • Transit Node | • Other County Govt. uses |
| • Public Plaza | • Transit Facilities (Park 'n Ride) | |
| • Commercial, dining, retail | • Activity Center | |

It is important to note that many of the above uses have a public or quasi-public component. In most cases, these would not likely produce any substantial revenue for the Road Commission or tax revenue for Scio Township, compared to commercial components. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the Road Commission work cooperatively with the township to ensure that there is a well-mixed utilization of the land, but that there are some limits on the use of the land from a tax-exempt to taxable ratio (i.e. set a limit on the percentage that will be devoted to public/tax exempt use). Without a mixed-use of the land, any added governmental or community uses (a recreation center, arts center, activity center) would be costly to build.

As Scio Township continues to grow, it may well decide that parks, recreation and community facilities are desired. These can be accomplished in the Town Center conceptual drawing presented in this report. (See *Preliminary Concept 2* under **Appendix H**.) However, paying for these amenities will require financial subsidy, either from private developers, from the tax revenue their commercial facilities generate for the township, a millage or some combination of the above. Therefore, if additional public amenities will be sought, a greater emphasis should be placed on securing a viable private developer whose revenue(s) can help to provide the support to build and maintain public/community/government facilities. (Refer also to the section on "Mixed-Use" below.)

Partnership(s) with Private Developers: The Task Force has recommended above that the Road Commission solicit proposals from potential development partners. The terms of the partnership should guarantee that the Road Commission's interests in the land and that the agency's revenue generation needs are protected and met. Leasing the property as opposed to selling it would likely produce the greatest long-term return for the Road Commission. In structuring a relationship with a developer, the Road Commission should be active in the business of developing the property. However, the Task Force discourages the Road Commission from being involved in the construction, leasing and/or maintaining of any buildings other than those owned and used by the agency. The Road Commission should also pursue a partnership with a developer who embraces the concept of creating a Town Center, not merely building a store. The developer-partner should support the creation of a pedestrian-friendly experience that fits with the concept of a Town Center.

Take the Long View: The Road Commission must be patient as it considers development options for its North Zeeb Road property. Sixty acres at a busy intersection is a valuable asset. However, since only government facilities currently exist on the Road Commission land, (and only a few commercial buildings reside on the adjoining properties), it could take 10 years or more for a vision of a viable Town Center to be fully built out. This is particularly true in the current economic climate.

Importance of Walkability: The Task Force strongly recommends that one of the core guiding principles that the Road Commission follow as it considers development options is to create a mix of uses that encourage walking from business-to-business. This is in contrast to the pattern of development along Jackson Road that is geared toward movement from business-to-business by vehicle. The ability to walk around is the essence of a town center and should be a central feature of the development of the site. Walkability can be enhanced by providing walking trails for recreation on the western portion of the site, to take advantage of the natural features. Walkability should also address connection to businesses on Jackson Road and other areas of the township, as appropriate. Non-motorized transportation should be a viable option for users of the site.

Importance of an Internal Boulevard/Street: Most of the schematic drawings provided in this report (under **Appendix H**), feature an internal boulevard/street, (or service drive), that runs north and south, parallel to North Zeeb Road. The Task Force recommends that the Road Commission

retain this internal main street in any development plan, as this could be a central feature of the Town Center. In addition, this road would allow businesses to develop away from North Zeeb Road, and would better provide for the creation of a mix of uses – office, retail, restaurant and other – that would be easily accessible to pedestrians. This pattern of development lends itself well to a central identifying characteristic – a tower, sculpture, band shell or other gathering place that establishes itself as an identity or welcoming image to Scio Township.

Mixed-Use: The Task Force recommends that a mix of uses is essential to the creation of a viable Town Center that has life and activity after 5:00 p.m. This will allow the greatest flexibility for developers to create a Town Center that functions and is financially viable. In that the Road Commission property currently includes only governmental offices, to create a Town Center where people are active in the evenings will require shopping, retail, restaurants and/or recreation facilities. The Road Commission should also be open to including residential in the area, depending on the market conditions, as well as the vision of the developer(s) and township for the site. Higher density residential will provide more market and income support to sustain a vibrant commercial center. (See **Appendix I** to review the *Financial Analysis and Market Viability Assessment* provided by Peter Allen & Associates.)

A Large Anchor: One of the predominant views of the success of the site from an economic viability standpoint is that a large anchor will be required. This could be a corporate headquarters or a large national retailer. The large anchor would then spawn other uses and business that would be complemented and supported by the traffic generated by the anchor. The reason an anchor is needed is because of the relatively sparse population in the township. This pattern of development is probably the most feasible in the short term. Developing the site without a large anchor will be more difficult, would take more time, and would involve more risk and uncertainty for the developer.

Any large anchor – whether it is office or retail – could create problems that must be carefully addressed. A large anchor will create instant traffic problems that must be mitigated as part of the development and which must include mitigation for future traffic that will be spawned by smaller complementary uses. If not carefully planned, the anchor could attract additional development along Zeeb Road. The Task Force has recommended above that this could be prevented by working in cooperation with Scio Township to create a greenbelt or development boundary that separates and distinguishes the developable area from the residential, agriculture and open space to the north and west.

Any large anchor should feature innovative parking design: not a large expansive parking lot typical of big box retail stores, but rather parking decks – and if possible, parking decks that are below ground level. If this is not an option, then parking lots should be smaller in size, encircle the building(s), and are broken up by landscape and stormwater retention ponds. This form of parking is essential to defining the *character* of the site. The central identifying feature of the development should not be a large parking lot. It should be smaller lots, served by the central street, which enable the patron of a large anchor to walk to and from the shops, offices and businesses within the Town Center.

If the large anchor is a national retailer(s), the Task Force recommends that the Road Commission insist on design parameters for the store that decrease the physical expanse of the building footprint, in addition to the parking lot. There are examples of large national retail stores being built in urban locations that break the traditional model of a big box, a design that is intended to serve an automotive-centered clientele. Again, it is important to reiterate that the Road Commission should insist a developer-partner who will support the Town Center concept and not merely build a store on the property. The developer-partner should be supportive of the

community, be willing to work with the township to create a pedestrian-friendly, unique work, shopping and visiting experience, and to invest in building the Scio Town Center for the future.

Green Building Design: The Road Commission should require any development in the site – including its own buildings – to incorporate “green building” features, including stormwater retention that enhances bioremediation and infiltration, including living roofs. Lighting and windows should capture sunlight for heat and light. Deciduous trees should shade buildings in the summer.

Planning and Design Standards Generally: This type of development will require careful planning. By developing a cohesive vision as to how a Town Center will look and function, design standards can be developed to achieve this vision. The use of design standards should be considered property-wide, not solely in the context of a large user.

F. Traffic Impact Considerations

This section of the report discusses the potential traffic impacts of increased vehicle congestion on Zeeb Road due to the proposed increased density of the Yard One development plan, (*as illustrated in the concepts under **Appendix H***). It is important to keep in mind two points; one is that many of these findings are based on preliminary data and assumptions; and two, that every problem has a solution. The Road Commission Traffic & Safety Section provided the Task Force with simulated traffic modeling showing what would be considered a worst-case peak hour vehicle scenario for Zeeb Road. The modeling was based on assumed peak hour weekday conditions between 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 pm.

The boundaries of North Zeeb Road that are impacted by the development are bounded by Pratt Road to the north and Jackson Road to the south. Almost every curb cut or access road to North Zeeb Road poses a traffic issue in one way or another. North Zeeb Road and its many access points also present barriers to pedestrian traffic and walkability that will not be helped by an increase of vehicle traffic.

All four of the proposed PUD access roads could end up with unacceptable queuing conditions for southbound turns onto North Zeeb Road. The Stone Gate Road and the National Archive Publishing Company, (*formerly ProQuest*), entrance drive have similar issues, but deal with left-turns onto North Zeeb Road. The I-94 off-ramps for both east and westbound traffic would also show an increase in queuing vehicles, which could extent as far back as their I-94 tapers.

Other curb cuts that present issues are the entrances to the McDonald’s Restaurant and to the BP Gas Station, where vehicles rely on the center-turn lane for both left-turns in and left-turns out of these establishments. In addition, there are several residential driveways on the east side of North Zeeb Road that would require longer wait times for access to North Zeeb Road.

Finally, there is the potential for excessive queuing in the North Zeeb Road left-turn lane for access onto I-94 westbound, which could back up as far as Jackson Road, and would primarily be caused by the larger volumes of southbound Zeeb Road traffic reducing the access to the on-ramp.

The solutions to traffic mitigation and traffic control typically involve roadway widening, the addition of signalized intersections and stop signs, the construction of roundabouts and the creation of dedicated turning lanes, to name a few. All of these potential solutions will have to deal with pedestrian traffic, which always adds another layer of issues. It is with consensus by the Task Force that any proposed improvements to Yard One should promote pedestrian traffic and should provide better pedestrian crossings on Zeeb Road and across the I-94 access ramps.

The Task Force realizes that any development of this site will have traffic impacts to Zeeb Road and the surrounding areas. The Task Force emphasizes the importance of its recommendation of creating a central boulevard concept within the site as a way to bring traffic off from Zeeb Road and to create a place for pedestrian activity. It is believed that the central boulevard concept can be the benchmark for almost any type of PUD, and if properly integrated with the surrounding road network, it could be one of the key solutions to future traffic mitigation on Zeeb Road.

The following recommendation points have been provided to simply restate our findings on addressing potential traffic impacts that may be associated with the development of this site:

- Maintain a Center Boulevard (a/k/a internal service drive) concept
- Understand use of PUD areas at full build-out and how those uses impact peak hour traffic
- Promote walkability through planned store locations, parking locations and evening store hours (create curb appeal)
- Provide alternate access points to McDonald's Restaurant and BP Gas Station
- Analyze impact on residential driveways
- Analyze dedicated ring on-ramp for northbound Zeeb Road traffic to I-94 westbound
- Analyze realignment options for the NAPC driveway (*formerly ProQuest*)
- Improve pedestrian crossings with areas of refuge on Zeeb Road and at I-94 access ramp locations
- Extend and widen (12'-15') pedestrian walkways along Zeeb Road over the creek and up to the Daycroft Montessori School or farther
- As the PUD dictates, in long-term planning, analyze mitigation of traffic through roundabouts and indirect left-turns over signalized intersections
- Promotes less vehicle pavements and more green spaces and the use of porous pavements or brick pavers
- Planning effort should address potential locations for a new pedestrian path over I-94 at the location of the Lowes store and the Yard One PUD

V. CONCLUSION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The development of the North Zeeb Road area not only provides a resource for the Road Commission to supplement its long-term revenue needs, but it offers the agency a valuable opportunity to collaborate with township officials and the community to define a distinctive *identity* and add vitality to the growing Township of Scio.

The Task Force's conclusions can be summarized by the following points:

- A. Given the Road Commission's current need to generate revenue, its plans for its facilities and its rights as a property owner to develop a highly valuable piece of land, it is clear that development of the property is inevitable.
- B. Development can be accomplished in a way that allows Scio Township to create a Town Center that includes government, community amenities, such as recreation or civic uses.
- C. Development that is limited to only government office uses will not allow the Road Commission to maximize the potential value of its property and will limit the generation of revenue from the property that could be used to support the government and communities amenities.
- D. Development should be centered off North Zeeb Road, on an internal street, and should be pedestrian-friendly.
- E. Development should be confined and limited through the creation of a greenbelt or development boundary that encircles the property on the north.
- F. Development of the area should be limited to the eastern portion of the property, and the wooded area and the wetlands should be protected in perpetuity as open space. Development should be required to minimize impervious surfaces to protect water quality, and storm water should be handled in a way that enhances and contributes to the restoration of the Honey Creek watershed.
- G. Increased traffic from a development is inevitable and must be mitigated. A transit hub should be included in plans for a Town Center. Traffic improvements must not only provide for the orderly movement of vehicles, but must support the creation of a pedestrian-friendly area.

The North Zeeb Road Task Force urges the Washtenaw County Road Commission to continue to work closely with Scio Township officials. It appears that Scio Township's plans to revise its Master Plan may be delayed. Nevertheless, the Task Force recommends that the Road Commission continue to work cooperatively with the township in the development of this site, and in assisting the community to refine its plans for a Scio Town Center.


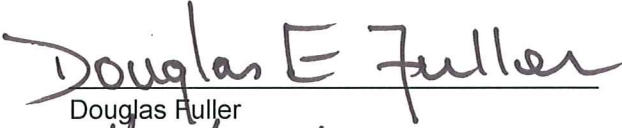

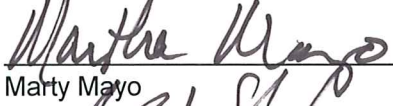

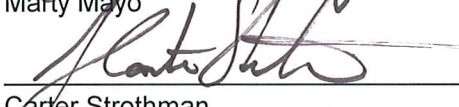

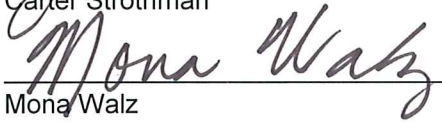
Additionally, as the Road Commission prepares to submit a revised proposal for its property, the Task Force recommends that the agency be guided not only by its need to produce an additional revenue stream, but also by its commitment to develop the property in such a way that it will be a welcome addition and benefit to the Scio Township community.

Finally, we recommend that this report be included as part of the Road Commission's Request for Proposal (RFP) package.

As the Road Commission moves forward to develop its revised PUD proposal for submission to Scio Township, the members of the North Zeeb Road Task Force urge the Board of County Road Commissioners to consider carefully the recommendations in this report. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the ideas and suggestions contained within this document reflect a consensus of the group and a belief that development consistent with these recommendations would allow the Road Commission to meet its goals of enhancing revenue and allow for the creation of a valuable asset to the Scio Township community.

*Respectfully submitted to the
Washtenaw County Board of Road Commissioners
on September 5, 2006
by the*

NORTH ZEEB ROAD TASK FORCE

 _____ Richard DeLong	 _____ Douglas Fuller
 _____ Janet Kreiling	 _____ Marty Mayo
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 _____ Tony VanDerworp	 _____ Mona Walz

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