


MEMORANDUM



cityofnovi.org

TO: MARK SPENCER, AICP, PLANNER

FROM: DAVID BESCHKE, RLA, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT 

SUBJECT: GRAND RIVER & BECK STUDY AREA

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

DATE: July 28, 2009

The Grand River and Beck Study Area has many positive environmental features worth consideration for any rezoning or development that may be proposed. These features include wetlands, woodlands, habitat and headwaters. Below is a brief overview of some of the environmental assets of this 95 acre study area.

City of Novi Regulated Wetland Map

The majority of the subject property is currently undeveloped. Novi's current Regulated Wetland Map suggests that significant areas of the site are saturated for a least a portion of the year. The map serves as a guide indicating the likely presence of regulated wetlands. Any parcel that is proposed for development must first be field delineated for wetlands to determine the true wetland boundaries. Preliminary review by City of Novi staff and consultants indicate that the study area does have a much greater area of wetlands than depicted on the current Regulated Wetland Map. To the north of Grand River Avenue, the wetlands are a mix of shrub-scrub and wooded wetlands, and are generally of good quality. One particular area of wetland in this area is approximately 2 acres in size and is a direct feeder to the Davis Drain flowing north through a culvert under I-96. Davis Drain feeds directly into the Walled Lake Branch of the Middle Rouge River. It is likely that the other smaller wetland systems on the north side of Grand River eventually feed through this system as well, possibly through ground water infiltration. On the south side of Grand River there exists a pond of approximately 1 acre in size and of high quality. Also on the south side of Grand River, approximately 25% of the land is wooded or scrub/shrub wetland. Any outflow from these wetlands flow through the Novi Lyon Drain into the Huron River. Any proposed development on the subject study area should be carefully considered in light of these environmental features.

City of Novi Regulated Woodland Map

Novi's current Regulated Woodland Map shows that the majority of the land south of Grand River Avenue contains regulated woodlands. The map serves as a guide indicating the likely presence of regulated woodlands. Preliminary review by City of Novi staff and consultants found that while the land north of Grand River does not currently depict the likely presence of regulated woodland, there does exist some significant stands of mature native trees. Any parcel that is proposed for development must be field surveyed for all trees 8" and larger, as well as documented for all

understory and lower vegetation to determine the true woodland boundaries. Much of the Study Area's woodland area is associated with wetlands and provides high quality habitat. Any proposed development in the Study Area should be carefully considered in light of these existing woodlands.

City of Oakland County Natural Features Map

The Oakland County Natural Features Map does not indicate the presence of exemplary natural features. However, if development is proposed on the study area site, careful attention should be paid to the functioning local natural systems and habitats. A number of methods may be considered for protection of these natural habitat features, including purchase, donation, trade, management agreements, conservation easements and mitigation strategies.

While performing preliminary investigations in the study area, staff encountered possums, rabbits, mallards and red-tailed hawks. Evidence was found indicating the presence of deer, raccoons and coyotes/ fox.

Oakland County Green Infrastructure Project

The recently completed Oakland County Green Infrastructure Visioning Project identified all interconnected networks of open spaces, natural areas and waterways within the County. The project focused on conservation values and the services provided by natural systems in concert with land development. A green infrastructure network is important as it supports native species, sustains natural ecological processes, maintains air and water resources, and contributes to our health and quality of life.

The visioning process included the classification of land areas utilizing the terms Hubs, Links or Sites. Hubs are larger environmental areas that anchor the green infrastructure network and provide an origin or destination for wildlife while helping to maintain natural ecological processes. Links are the connections that hold the network together and enable strong environmental functions. Sites are typically smaller than Hubs, and serve as points of origin or destination within a green infrastructure network.

A portion of the study area south of Grand River Avenue has been identified through the Oakland County Green Infrastructure Visioning Project as a link. This link forms a connection between area hubs and sites, making this link a valuable asset as green infrastructure.

Oakland County Priority Green River Corridors

Oakland County's Priority Green River Vision Map was unveiled in October of 2007. The map was part of a multi-disciplinary study intended to identify priority river corridors that provide significant wildlife habitat, biodiversity function, water quality protection, and

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

JULY 28, 2009

PAGE 3 OF 3

community amenities including scenic, recreational, historical and cultural values. A green infrastructure network supports native species, sustains natural ecological processes, maintains air and water resources, and contributes to our health and quality of life. The value of riparian buffers and challenges to development implementation were considered.

Although no priority river corridors are located in the study area, runoff from the northern portion of the study area contributes through the Walled Lake Branch to the Middle Rouge River into the Rouge River Watershed. Runoff from the southern portion of the study area contributes through the Novi Lyon Drain to the Upper Huron River Watershed. These priority green river corridors have high environmental value and drainage basins contributing to these rivers are worthy of special consideration should any development be proposed in the vicinity.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Floodplain

No portion of the study site is designated as floodplain by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

DRB