

Natural Features Protection, Phase 2 Amendments to Chapter 50, Article 6 of the Zoning Code
PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED THROUGH 6/22/2021

I'm writing in support of the proposed Phase 2 Natural Features Plan before you.

First, thank you all for your collective personal time and hard work given to the City of Kalamazoo and for all of us who live here or visit.

As a long time resident of the greater Kalamazoo area I have taken many friends and visitors from outside SW Michigan to visit our area. Invariably, they are impressed with the natural features here, but also the obvious care that the residents take in making it beautiful. From the number of homes with flowers on display to the clean and quiet natural areas within our city, such as Asylum Lake and Kleinstruck Preserve, visitors and residents alike do notice and appreciate the unique beauty of Kalamazoo.

I've spoken with a number of people who said that the natural beauty and charm of our area was an important part of the "mix" in their deciding to live and work in our community.

Your actions on the NFP will become part of our city's future identity, and have long lasting consequences benefiting wildlife, our environment, and our local economy in powerful, positive ways.

Again, thank all of you for your dedication to our community.

Sincerely,
Bart Seelye

Dear Natural Features Protection Review Board and Planning Commission,

The Audubon Society of Kalamazoo supports the NFP Phase 2 Overlay currently under consideration by your members. We recognize that all creatures--bird, human, and others--benefit when steps are taken to encourage thoughtful land use policies. By adding the Phase 2 protections to land adjacent to natural gems like Asylum Lake, Kleinstuck, and Bow in the Clouds Preserves, and by protecting watersheds like David Creek, birds that have been facing steep population declines in recent years will face slightly less pressure.

Recommendation of the NFP Phase 2 Overlay to the Planning Commission and, subsequently, to the City Commission, will help to ensure that the City of Kalamazoo continues to be a destination for both birds and the birders who watch them. We strongly urge that you recommend it for approval.

Sincerely,

Audubon Society of Kalamazoo Board of Directors

Nate Strong, President
Ilse Gebhard
Susan Creager
Laura Shaw

Donna Keller
David Riggs
John Chenault
Pam Jackson

We support the vision of the Natural Features Protection Ordinance and Overlay District is to achieve long-term protection and management of Natural Features for public enjoyment and environmental health.

The extension of the overlay Ordinance includes parcels surrounding the Asylum Lake Preserve, including Highpointe, to add protection to that green space.

We live on Highpointe and visit Asylum Lake Preserve frequently.

Thank you.

Sidney Brush

I was so pleased when the City approved Phase 1 of the NFP, which has successfully protected some of our natural landscapes.

I am writing in support of Phase 2 of the NFP which, if approved, will protect additional natural features such as important concentrations of trees, slopes, waterways, and more within the city, many of them adjacent to existing protected parcels like birding hotspots Asylum Lake and Kleinstuck Preserves.

I have been a life-long (79 years!) resident of the City of Kalamazoo and have so appreciated the City's efforts to protect some of the natural areas that are so unique to a city landscape.

MELANIE J PERRY

Thanks for reviewing the draft NFP with me over the phone. Although I feel much better about the impact to me I still don't like having my private property rights taken from me. I support NFP for public Non-taxed and commercial property.

Because I believe private property rights are significantly impacted with no option to opt out, I see this much like eminent domain. If this NFP Draft goes forward I will be urging our commission to consider a fare compromise to make this more palatable to private property owners. If the Water, Slopes ,and Trees are valuable to the greater community then the greater community should support it. I suggest a significant tax break for any mapped property owners. This could make more folks willing and happy to be part of this preservation. I think this is fair and reasonable.

Matt Bond

Dear NFP Review Board and Kalamazoo Planning Commission,

I am a long-time resident of Kalamazoo with a great deal of fondness of this city. It offers so very much to everyone.

I also enjoy being out in nature and value those areas. Green/trees are serene and healing forces. The city of Kalamazoo needs to protect those areas within its jurisdiction. Private owners are not always so

farsighted - I'm thinking of the large expanse of trees along Drake that WMU cut to make way for their business area.

So, please, you must guarantee that people have green in their lives.

Thank you.

Lyda Stillwell
4236 Persianwood Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
269-388-4839

This quote is important to show that when you draw a line you and do the right thing (passing the Phase II Map) there will be some anger but you can turn the tide. Many of the people on your board will now of the DDT and Rachel Carson, but not of the politic reaction and then the people's movement that created the Environmental Defense Fund.

DDT sprayed on vegetation washed into the oceans. It concentrated in fish, which were then eaten by birds of prey: in Maine, that meant ospreys. The DDT caused the birds to lay eggs with abnormally thin eggshells, so thin the eggs cracked in the nest when the parent birds tried to incubate them. And so the osprey began to die off.

When The New Yorker began to serialize Carson's book in June 1962 officers of chemical companies were scathing. "If man were to faithfully follow the teachings of Miss Carson," an executive of the American Cyanamid Company said, "we would return to the Dark Ages, and the insects and diseases and vermin would once again inherit the earth." Officers of Monsanto questioned Carson's sanity. But other Americans were willing to listen. Silent Spring inspired the fledgling environmental movement. In 1967, the Environmental Defense Fund organized to protect the environment; in 1970, President Richard M. Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency. In 1972, the U.S. banned the use of DDT.

It is time to move forward and get the map approved.

Karin Larsen

Dear NFP Review Board,

As a life long resident of Kalamazoo County and having recently returned to the city, I want to offer my support for the proposed changes to Natural Features Protection in the city. The entire concept is admirable and I have high respect for all who have and are working to this end. The recent concern displayed over potential damage to the Asylum Lake Preserve and the proposed addition to the Kleinstuck Preserve certainly display enthusiastic public support for "green space" in the city. This plan seems to have an excellent balance of protection and development, both of which are important to any community. So, I want to urge adoption of the updates to the plan.

I would like to add that I am a competent birder and naturalist, active with the Audubon Society of Kalamazoo, who has volunteered on many projects and surveys in SW Michigan.

Best Regards,
Russ Schipper

To: Members of the Kalamazoo NFP Review Board and the Planning Commission

I support adoption of Phase 2 of the Natural Features Plan. It will significantly improve the quality of the Kalamazoo environment and add value for generations. My own property is included in Phase 2.

Charles Hodgman
1104 EDGEMOOR AVE
KALAMAZOO, MI 49008

Thank you for the very thoughtful work being carried out by the Natural Features Protection Review Board and staff. It is tremendously encouraging to see that our City has obtained the guidance of such experienced and informed people to develop these critical standards and to implement them in sensible ways. I am encouraged that, although our City has precious little in protected natural areas, the steps you have taken in this analysis and provide in the expanded features protection are essential for sustaining the natural features we still do have and guiding thoughtful decisions in development and construction.

In the past several years I have learned a great deal about the critical importance of these natural features for the future health and well-being of all life in our City and surrounding area. This has led a group of us to help remove the life-choking invasion of non-native honeysuckle and other invasive plants and restore the common space owned by the Cliffs Association within Parkview Hills to native plantings. Through the generous guidance and assistance of knowledgeable volunteer stewards like your NFP Review Board members, we have made great progress that is very heartening to witness. But it is far better to protect these natural features and sustain them in the first place, as your expanded Overlay seeks to do, than to lose them or attempt to manipulate their recovery and return, if that is possible at all. It is clear that the sensitive natural features “next door” to the north and east of Asylum Lake are extremely vulnerable to this fate, without the expanded overlay and thoughtful zoning.

Please continue your progressive and critical work to preserve the natural features of our community by adopting and implementing the revised overlay and standards, and help educate our citizens so that they come to understand their direct self-interest in this endeavor.

With my thanks for your service and this good work,
Rochelle V. Habeck, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, Cliffs Association Landscape Committee
Member, Parkview Hills Natural Areas Stewardship Committee
3638 Woodcliff Drive
Kalamazoo MI 49008

To: NFP Review Board and Kalamazoo Planning Commission

We are writing to urge that the NFP Review Board recommend implementation of Phase 2 of the NFP as it currently stands. The addition of these proposed parcels to the NFP Overlay has been done following

an impressively thorough and deliberative evaluation and documentation of the natural features of each property that justify increased zoning standards. The inclusion of these properties in the NFP Overlay District promotes more thoughtful development but does not preclude responsible development.

The loss of a few trees or pervious green space here and a few more trees there may seem minor when viewed individually. However, from a broader perspective, it appears we are headed to a death by a thousand cuts. Michigan loses a statistically significant amount of tree cover (>4000 acres) annually, mostly due to development and increased impermeable surfaces. This loss of trees contributes to an urban heat island effect, increased energy consumption, increased air pollution, decreased water quality, and compromised human health and comfort. There are three billion fewer birds in North America today than there were 50 years ago, and roughly half of the riparian ecosystems and wetlands in the lower 48 States have already been lost. In January 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad which outlines the challenge to conserve at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030. The Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful report to the National Climate Task Force addresses the President's 30x30 Directive and is a call to action to support locally led and locally designed community conservation and restoration efforts of all kinds to safeguard land and water. The City of Kalamazoo declared a Climate Emergency in October 2019, accepting the role of regional leadership, with a commitment to implement actions to reduce the impacts of climate change and increase community resilience.

Inclusion of these proposed properties and their functioning ecosystems within the NFP Overlay would be consistent with the intent of the President's Executive Order and the City's declaration of a Climate Emergency. For some properties, inclusion in the NFP Overlay would provide public access to nature, especially for underserved populations. The NFP Phase 2 plan has been well developed. Understanding that there will probably not ever be complete agreement with each and every parcel, it is time to move forward with this comprehensive action that will support Kalamazoo's declaration of a Climate Emergency. Not moving forward with Phase 2 would be inconsistent with federal and local mandates and patently unjustifiable. For all of these reasons, we urge you to consider the long-term beneficial effects and consequences to our community from the protection of natural features.

Respectfully,
Gail Walter and Tom Nehil

The Board of the Oakland Drive – Winchell Neighborhood Association supports the Natural Features Protection (NFP) Phase II Map and proposed Ordinance changes that were posted on the City website as of May 21, 2021. The Board commends and thanks the NFP Review Board, Ms. Jamie McCarthy (City Sustainable Development Coordinator), and Mr. Nolan Bergstrom (City Intern – specializing in GIS applications) for their diligence and perseverance. In the opinion of the Board, the documents described above: 1) align with the City Master Plan; 2) align with the Oakland Drive – Winchell Neighborhood Plan; and 3) set a logical and equitable foundation for managing and protecting the natural features in the City of Kalamazoo, both now and for generations to come.

We are writing this note concerning the changes to the Natural Features Protection Overlay map. We object to the inclusion of our property in the NFP overlay map as currently proposed. While we understand the intent of the NFP Overlay, we continue to believe it is neither necessary nor appropriate

to include our property in the overlay district. As we brought to your attention previously, our property is already appropriately protected by an existing conservation easement with the Kalamazoo Nature Center; second, there is no rational basis for imposing the additional NFP overlay standards on our property when nearly identical adjacent properties within our neighborhood are excluded from the overlay district.

Will affected residents be notified by mail of the proposed map changes? We have spoken with several neighbors who were not aware of the changes.

We continue to be very concerned about the significant investment that we have made in our home in Kalamazoo. The proposed zoning changes have the potential to reduce neighborhood property values by placing significant restrictions on property owners to be able to maintain, improve, and redevelop their property for future use or sale. The effect on values will be substantial, as the standards of the new overlay district are not feasible for many property owners to achieve – for instance, the time and costs it will take to go through this process will be substantially greater than prior to the implementation of the zoning overlay. The replacement options for landscape are also too limited. As a direct consequence, property values for those included in the overlay district will drop, and significantly so. It is unrealistic for anyone on the board to expect that imposing significant use restrictions on a person's property would have anything other than a negative impact on its current and future value. We intentionally avoided purchasing a home in the Historic District because of very similar concerns that are now impacting us as property owners outside of that district.

In addition to the effects on value, and the real-world impossibility of compliance for many property owners, the decision to gerrymander the boundary to include our property makes no sense. The east side of Long Road (our land) is included, but the west side, for the most part, is not. The inclusion of our property, while excluding identical property that is adjacent, is arbitrary at best. There are several additional parcels within our neighborhood that have similar slopes and tree cover which were not included in the overlay.

From recent meetings and discussions with neighbors and others impacted by the rezoning, we know our opinions are shared by many who have not yet attended meetings or have had a meaningful opportunity to send a letter to you (most have not received notice of the map changes as noted above). We respectfully request that you reconsider including our property in your final NFP Overlay map, and remove our property from the proposed overlay district in advance of the final submission from this board to the planning commission. We ask that our right to control our property not be invalidated by the NFP board.

Sincerely,
Michael and Morgen Baer

The Board of the Asylum Lake Preservation Association supports the City of Kalamazoo's proposed additions to the NFP protections. We note especially that the area around the Asylum Lake Preserve has additional parcels reserved in Phase Two. This adjacent area is an important one to include, as the Preserve is under pressure from development, since it is located within the City, which has limited green space. We support these additions, which further protect this significant resource to the community.

The ALPA Board of Directors, John Kreuzer, Chair; Lauri Holmes, Co-chair; Judy Huxmann, Treasurer; Sherry Sims, Secretary; Susan Andress, at-large; Donna Tellam, at-large; David Nesius, at-large; Mark Hoffman, at-large

mcClintontl@gmail.com - thank you for listing to all the people of all the neighborhoods all around, about natural green space , i do support the inclusion of our undeveloped parcels between lake and stockbridge and east of john int he nfp ,this area in our southtown neighborhoods last remaining natural green space ,natural watershed and the last home for the wildlife that live there, and needs protection of the nfp board i would like to please ask to see the inclusion of the highlighted plat map to verify each parcel in our natural green space in our neighborhood , we recently performed an on site tour of our natural green space with the ecc we walked it with them we toured the existing trail system ,the natural hydrology helps control watershed from the neighborhood and it is heavily wooded and lots of big trees and o pronounced slop, what does this mean for our last little piece of country in the city in southtown neighborhood and helps with flooding in our neighborhood , i no the nfp if i understand does not guarantee the site will remain undeveloped , what will this mean for are last natural green space that we of the neighborhood love so much , thank you for listing to us and thank you for saving green spaces around town please help save ours tina mcclinton 310 lake this little space help us so much , with the peace and quite flooding air quality climate changes animals and love the relaxing watching the animals big and small.

Richard@2693457000.com - We support the inclusion of the 9 undeveloped parcels between lake and Stockbridge, east of john street on the NFP map. These parcels are Southtown Neighborhoods' last remaining natural greenspace, natural watershed, and natural wildlife habitat. The area is filled with trails that the neighborhood enjoys. While the area is woods, there is a significant slope where the area is high on the lake st side while lower on the Stockbridge side. This area is known by the neighborhood to naturally help drain the excess water in the area. I would like to see the inclusion of highlighted plat map to verify each parcel in this natural space, but it appears it has been included. I am concerned that the recently added board member has a financial interest in this site and has a conflict of interest in this neighborhood. Our neighborhood recently performed an onsite tour of the natural space with board members of the ECC. We toured the existing trail systems in detail. The natural hydrology helps control watershed from the neighborhood, it is heavily wooded and has a pronounced slope. While the inclusion of the site in NFP does not guarantee the site will remain undeveloped natural space, as our neighborhood plan specifies, it will hold any future developers to a standard consistent with other similar natural sites.

The ODWNA supports the Natural Features Protection (NFP) Phase II Map and proposed Ordinance changes that were posted on the City website as of May 21, 2021. The Board commends and thanks the NFP Review Board, Ms. Jamie McCarthy (City Sustainable Development Coordinator), and Mr. Nolan Bergstrom (City Intern – specializing in GIS applications) for their diligence and perseverance. In the opinion of the Board, the documents described above: 1) align with the City Master Plan; 2) align with the Oakland Drive – Winchell Neighborhood Plan; and 3) set a logical and equitable foundation for managing and protecting the natural features in the City of Kalamazoo, both now and for generations to come.

The Board of the Oakland Drive Winchell Neighborhood Association

We reside at 840 Carolee in Kalamazoo. Our property is adjacent to the Phase II proposed expansion of the NFP of which we are very pleased!

We do have a couple of questions. The back of our property is part of a sloped, wooded area. The properties that meet our property line in the woods are located on Whites Rd, specifically 909 and 921 Whites Rd. These addresses are part of the proposed expansion. In 2020, the owners of 909 Whites Rd hired someone to clear cut most of the large trees in their backyard down the slope and into the woods. We were not happy to see this happening to the beautiful, old trees! Now, we are distressed to see that the property next door (921 Whites Rd) is doing the same thing! Is there anything that can be done? We realize that it's too late for the dozens of trees that have already been cut down, but are the property owners required to replant to replace the trees? Or more importantly, how to keep more properties on Whites Rd from clear cutting their backyards?

Mary and Steve Bittner

To: NFP and Planning Committees

Now is the time for those of us who are living here to support the proposed Natural Features Protection zoning overlay ordinance and map so carefully worked out over time by city planners and neighborhood associations, along with many volunteer expert professionals, and with input from countless residents, including ourselves. We are a nature-loving and people-loving community. This is our moment to protect and retain our local ecosystem long term for future generations to enjoy. Fortunately, neighboring communities are doing the same. This is nature's best hope!

Karen and Phil Kunze

2012 Chevy Chase Blvd. Kalamazoo, MI 49008

Winchell neighborhood residents since 1969, and members of ODWNA

My property adjoins Glen Park South. I am very much in support of the inclusion of Glen Park, in addition to my property, being included in the Phase 2 overlay district. Glen Park South has very steep slopes and is already experiencing significant erosion. This is affecting our street and neighboring properties during heavy rains by causing flooding. The inclusion of Glen Park South in the NFP Overlay District will help to thwart development that would exacerbate this erosion, in addition to protecting the woodland area in the park. My husband and I chose to purchase our home due in large part to the wooded nature of our property and the natural beauty and serenity of Glen Park South. We are both fully in support of maintaining and protecting these attributes under the NFP status.

Rebecca Nevala

As a community member and member of the Oakwood Neighborhood board, I want to voice my encouragement in favor of moving forward to adopt this new map. We are glad to see the expansion of the Natural Features Protection Overlay District boundaries (2203 Parkview Ave).

Ellen Tober

I live in the Oakwood Neighborhood and we are very fortunate to have Asylum and Woods Lake close by for the beauty and animals that live in these natural environments. Both lakes are in trouble. They have for too long been the drain areas for city streets and other environmental hazards. The water quality in both of these systems that feed other water ways in the area are in trouble due human runoff and pollutants. These natural areas need our protection as well as other areas that feed into the waterways of Kalamazoo.

Back at the turn of the 1900's there was an article that ran in the paper that told about how polluted the Kalamazoo River was from factories and runoff. The article talked about how people that lived on the river were moving away due to the smell and pollution. The end of the article stated that there was nothing that the present residents could do but that it was a problem that would need to be addressed by the generations to come.

We are that generation. The NFP Phase II map will help preserve the lands, water, and species that live among us. This action is over 100 years late in coming, but it is time. This is a historic moment. Your choice will determine what is really important. I am betting that future generations will remember your action and be grateful.

Karin Larsen
