

Economic Development Committee Report - Citizens Advisory Council

Question: What is the economic vision for the Township?

Answer: There are three parts to this response:

- a) To increase the tax base by developing the vacant or abandoned property with clean manufacturing or new technology corporate headquarters.
- b) Improve livability of Plymouth Township and demonstrate that it is a desirable location to own a home. Increasing property values = increased tax revenue.
- c) Encourage and develop increasing employment opportunities.

DeHoCo Area: The former prison property on 120 acres, owned by the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority since 2015, announced in September that it is seeking proposals to purchase and redevelop the property. According to Gary Roberts, a Real Estate Developer and Principal Planner for this project, the 120 acre parcel is part of an 800 acre area along the Five Mile corridor in Plymouth and Northville Townships. He predicted that 6,000 to 8,000 jobs will be created in this area. Josh Burdett, Director of the Land Bank, estimates that the DeHoCo site is likely to be developed within the next 2 years. To date, \$2.2 million has been invested in demolition of the vacant prison buildings. Burdett called the site, “probably the second highest priority project in the Michigan Land Bank inventory of 4,000 sites”. The vision for the site is to become part of the Michigan International Technology Center, an advanced technology business park.

Plymouth Township Officials have also discussed the 132 Acres of Township-owned property on the Southwest corner of Ridge and 5 Mile Road. It has been reported that 72 acres can be developed and 60 acres are designated as wetland and parkland. David Green, a principal of Signature Associates marketing firm, hired to promote the property, believes that the land could be marketed in such a fashion.

The Economic Development Committee suggested that some of the Township owned property could be devoted to artificial turf softball fields. These would require less maintenance than turf fields. These assets would attract leagues and tournaments from around the area which would also produce revenue. (See photos)

An important consideration is to envision these multiple owned properties, with significant natural features, as one large multidimensional development. Never lose sight of the “big picture”.

Former Burroughs Property: This property was sold on November 18, 2016 to **Plymouth 848 LLC** for \$4,625,000. The new owners will decide whatever development they wish under the existing zoning for that location. We are not at liberty to dictate use to the new owners.

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Ann Arbor Corridor: The Economic Development Committee was pleased to see the former **Pizza Hut** property being repurposed as an auto parts retail establishment. We are hopeful that the former **K-Mart** property will be converted to additional retail establishments, restaurants or service businesses.

The former **Steak & Ale** property would be an ideal location for a national hotel or restaurant chain due to the property's location in close proximity to the I-275 exit.

The committee recommends that there should be developed a friendlier walking or bike path link between the Ann Arbor Road corridor (I-275 to Sheldon Road) and downtown Plymouth. Some of the property would be within the City of Plymouth, and with the cooperation of the City of Plymouth, it could serve to improve both communities with easier welcoming passage along the entire linear business corridors.

Hilltop Golf Course Area: The consensus of the Economic Development Committee is to maintain the golf course with several improvements.

1. Improve the configuration of the greens to make them flatter and more playable for the average golfer. Some of the greens can be considered unfair. As a result, many golfers prefer St. Johns, Northville, Fox Run or other nearby courses. With physical course improvements designed by a golf design professional, play would surely increase.
2. In addition, it is suggested that the contract with the golf course management company should be negotiated with a larger share of the golf revenue flowing to the Township.
3. Hilltop's present policy of requiring a credit card to reserve a tee time is a turnoff. If you reserve for four golfers and only three players show up, your credit card is charged for the no-show golfer. No other local golf course has a similar policy, to our knowledge.
4. Installation of golf simulators for indoor activity in the winter. There are simulators at Cattails Golf Club in South Lyon where the monthly membership fee to use the equipment is \$149.00 per person. This would provide year-round income for Hilltop.

The Township-owned property adjacent to the golf course is not utilized for golf course operation. This empty land on the Northeast corner of Ann Arbor Trail and Beck could be developed. There were many suggestions for the possible use of this property including a business similar to **C. J. Barrymore's Family Entertainment Center** in Clinton Township. It would be indoor recreation that produces tax revenue for the Township, but zoning restrictions would need to be addressed.

Finally, it was proposed for a dramatic improvement in the access way for foot and bicycle traffic between the Golf Course/Township Park and Kellogg Park in the City. This would require bike paths wider than normal sidewalks, and other carefully thought out improvements to link these locations.

Submitted by: Ron Bullotta