

Sustainable Zoning Focus Group Meeting
September 30, 2008

Participants:

Lukas Hill, Spring Lake Township
Kristin Kerry, City of Grand Haven
Lynée Wells, Williams & Works
Jim Rozema, Williams & Works
Steve Kinder, Williams & Works
Landon Bartley, City of Grand Rapids
Andy Bowman, Grand Valley Metro Council
Dave McKenzie, Hortech

This was an informal, round table discussion. The notes reflect concepts discussed.

1. Sustainability should be thought of as a “silo” of ideas and concepts, not separated out into the “three leg stool.” All solutions in terms of land use and zoning should be environmentally-sound, economically-viable, and socially responsible.
2. The City of Grand Rapids allows personal wind turbines for residential use. These small scale turbines for a residential application are permitted by-right. The City is considering changing this to a special land use to allow for public hearing. Public hearings should be thought of as educational tools for the general public.
3. The Grand Valley Metro Council has a guide book for form based zoning. They are encouraging a design charrette for sub areas of communities to better plan for major new development. In the design charrette, all sustainable zoning tools can be explored and decided upon. The results of the charrette could include an overlay ordinance and any future developer would have to comply with the vision/end product as decided through the public charrette process.
4. Algoma Township has an open space preservation ordinance that is worth reviewing. They are strict with preservation of open space and backing out all natural features from the developable area before doing a preliminary design.
5. Grand Valley Metro Council has a template for a commerce center design. It is worth reviewing for the commercial nodes in Spring Lake Township.
6. Low Impact Development practices should be addressed in the storm water ordinance. Can discharge fees be waived for green roofs or zero discharge sites? Can we require zero discharge across the Township? Coordinate with Ottawa County Drain Commissioner.
7. Sustainable development should be shown to the public. They need to visualize what it looks like.
8. Green roofs are becoming more and more popular. Some communities require them for projects of a certain size.
9. The point system for green development has drawbacks. It would have to be very complex to apply to the various uses in a community. It might be better to offer incentives or require certain sustainable development tools rather than a point system.
10. Watch out for contradictions in the zoning ordinance. For example, geothermal wells and distance requirements from structures and other wells, roof top solar panels and screening requirements of roof top mechanicals, and tree protection versus passive solar orientation.

11. Could there be a bonus or incentive for saving trees, perhaps credit towards discharge fees?
12. Discussion about sustainable design needs to happen before the developer identifies the property. Offering monthly design technical reviews might be helpful. This could apply to residential, commercial or industrial development.
13. PUDs are mixed blessings, but sustainable development requirements should not only be in a PUD section, they should be throughout the ordinance if the community desires this type of development. Otherwise, developers may be discouraged from developing under a PUD.
14. We need to identify those sustainable development tools that the Township cannot live without.
15. Administrative departures are advised for sustainable zoning practices; however, it does give the Community Development Director a lot of power.