

June 22, 2021

Dear Planning Commission Members and City Planner,

We are very pleased and excited that the Planning Commission will be taking up the Phase II Map and Text Amendments to the Natural Features Protection (NFP) Overlay at its upcoming July 1 meeting. The Natural Features Protection Review Board of Directors has been working frequently on this additional board task under the thoughtful and diligent guidance of City Staff Jamie McCarthy, as well as invaluable technical assistance from Nolan Bergstrom.

Efforts to create the NFP began in 2018. This process was initiated by a Planning Commission meeting attended by 100s of members of the public whose comments went past midnight, echoed the spirit of Imagine Kalamazoo, and overwhelmingly voiced their support for preservation of the natural environment within the city. A more balanced development process in sensitive environmental areas via the Natural Features Protection Overlay was the result. Since then, the strategies and impact of the project have been deliberated and debated by local professionals, educators, and scientists in a variety of areas well related to the task. A major piece of feedback at the aforementioned Planning Commission meeting from the public was to be more inclusive and consistent with our choice of designated areas within NFP. After a year of application and trial of the original NFP ordinance and map, renewed deliberation and use of the language and scope of the map began. As with any good pioneering study and process we are at a phase of expanding and improving the language of the overlay as well as fine tuning and defining the map of parcels and features to be more inclusive, objective, consistent, thoughtful, fair, and simple.

During the NFP Review Board's time reviewing projects, we have learned so much including the challenges, loopholes, and unnecessary complications. NFP Phase II represents our approach to remediate those issues, while maintaining the integrity of the overlay, and listening to the concerns of the public. As a board of professionals from environmental and development fields, it is our goal to make our city a better place by facilitating more development while not losing valuable natural features that make the city a desirable place to work and live in the process. We have reviewed many development proposals for both commercial and residential projects and have always been constructive, and have always compromised with a solution for any applicant seeking a variance. No proposed development has been stopped during this time.

We support smart development that values natural features and the universal benefits they provide to the community like clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, and carbon storage (consistent with sustainability goals). These efforts to balance environment and development are also meant to accommodate personal freedoms afforded to private property owners in the city, while recognizing that natural features can also increase value to a landowner in a number of ways including property values and health benefits. As such, we proudly recommend these updates be reviewed by your board and recommended to City Commission for approval.

Sincerely,

NFP Review Board

Mitch Lettow, Chair
Erin Fuller
Paul MacNellis
Allan Sylvester

Ashley Cole-Wick, Vice Chair
Bobby Glasser
Kyle Martin

To: Mayor David Anderson, Vice Mayor Patrese Griffin and City Commissioners
Pete Eldridge and Jamie McCarthy, City Planning Office

From: Kalamazoo Environmental Concerns Committee

Date: Thursday, June 17th, 2021

Subject: Natural Features Protection Ordinance

Background:

The ECC has been involved in the discussion about the creation of the Natural Features Protection Board, and was strongly in favor from the beginning. We hear frequent updates about the NFP board, as we currently share a member. Our understanding is that City staff have responsibly gathered community input regarding an expansion to the NFP overlay map.

Recommendation:

The Environmental Concerns Committee strongly supports the Phase 2 expansion of the Natural Features Protection Ordinance and its increased coverage of properties throughout the City.

We have noted the effectiveness of the ordinance in its initial phase as the staff and NFP Board have worked constructively with developers in the City to take into account environmental features as they plan their projects. The map and the list of proposed parcels reflects thoughtful and careful consideration of features which ordinarily might be overlooked.

This increased care for the green environment of the City is important in view of the challenges brought about by climate change and increasing urban density everywhere. We are pleased that Kalamazoo is investing thought and effort in preserving green elements, thus encouraging smarter and more sustainable development in our city.



Asylum Lake Policy and Management Council

Landscape Services • Western Michigan University • Kalamazoo MI 49008-5324

Asylum Lake Policy and Management Council

Duane Hampton (Chair)
Department of Geological and
Environmental Sciences

Mark Frever
WMU Landscape Services

Peter Strazdas
WMU Facilities Management

Cybelle Shattuck
WMU Facilities Management

David Lemberg
College of Arts and Sciences

Steve Kohler
Institute of the Environment
and Sustainability

James Penner
Campus Planning and
Finance Council

Lauri Holmes
Asylum Lake Preservation
Association

John Kreuzer (alternate)
Asylum Lake Preservation
Association

Sharon Dever
City of Kalamazoo
Environmental Concerns
Committee

Tyler Bassett
Kalamazoo Environmental
Council

Kay Chase (alternate)
Kalamazoo Environmental
Council

Paul Scott
Oakland Drive/Winchell
Neighborhood Association

Bonnie Alkema
Neighborhood Association
of Parkview Hills

Marnie Twynham
Parkwyn Village
Neighborhood Association

Tom Sauber
WMU Natural Areas Manager
Ex-officio

To: The City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission

Date: June 23, 2021

On June 10, 2021, the Asylum Lake Policy and Management Council passed the following resolution:

The Asylum Lake Policy and Management Council supports Phase 2 of the Natural Features Protection Ordinance and its increased coverage of properties throughout the City.

We note especially that the parcels immediately adjacent to the Asylum Lake Preserve are being added to the protection afforded by the Ordinance.

Inclusion of these adjoining properties is particularly important, as the Preserve is under pressure from the surrounding roadways and potential development. This additional protection of the area around Asylum Lake offers benefits to the City which has limited green space.

We also commend the work that is already being done by the Board and staff in assisting individuals and developers in including a natural features perspective in their planning and development.

The Members of the Asylum Lake
Policy and Management Council

From: [Conway, Neal](#)
To: [McCarthy, Jamie](#); [Eldridge, Peter](#)
Subject: FW: [External Email] NFP Review Board and Planning Commission for the City of Kalamazoo
Date: Friday, June 18, 2021 10:32:12 AM

Neal Conway
Communications Coordinator
City of Kalamazoo
(269) 337-8080
conwayn@kalamazoocity.org
www.kalamazoocity.org

From: Bart and Amy Seelye <absee620@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 18, 2021 10:30 AM
To: hello <hello@kalamazoocity.org>
Subject: [External Email] NFP Review Board and Planning Commission for the City of Kalamazoo

Spooing Indicators

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

From: [Conway, Neal](#)
To: [Eldridge, Peter](#); [McCarthy, Jamie](#)
Subject: FW: [External Email] Natural Features Plan
Date: Monday, June 21, 2021 9:13:43 AM

Neal Conway
Communications Coordinator
City of Kalamazoo
(269) 337-8080
conwayn@kalamazoocity.org
www.kalamazoocity.org

From: charleshodgman@gmail.com <charleshodgman@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, June 19, 2021 8:30 AM
To: hello <hello@kalamazoocity.org>
Subject: [External Email] Natural Features Plan

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

From: [JoAnn Yochim](#)
To: mccarthyia@kalamazocity.org
Cc: [Eldridge, Peter](#)
Subject: [External Email] Natural Features Protection Board
Date: Monday, June 21, 2021 7:22:12 PM

I wish to express my support of the proposed extension of the Natural Features Ordinance , Phase 2. Please approve this proposal. I commend our city planners for this work to maintain and enhance the residential areas of our city, and the quality of life within the city.
JoAnn Yochim

Diana Morton-Thompson
1827 Sheffield Drive, Kalamazoo, MI 49008

24 May 2021

Ms. Jamie McCarthy
Sustainable Development Coordinator
City of Kalamazoo – Community Planning & Development
415 Stockbridge Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49001

**RE: Protection (NFP) Documents: Phase II Map and proposed Ordinance changes
As posted on the City website by May 21, 2021**

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

I am writing a registered professional geologist, and as a homeowner who has two (2) residential parcels in the Oakland Drive – Winchell Neighborhood that would now be covered by the NFP-Phase II. And I firmly support the passage and enactment of the above captioned NFP-Phase II documents.

In my opinion:

The technical basis for the Phase II Map is evident in that it: a) balances a science-based approach with a common sense approach; and b) clearly respects the fundamental integrity of the stream, inland lake, topographic slope and woodland systems in the City. These natural features benefit us all. However, they are a finite resource and without good stewardship it is quite possible that these critical parts of Nature may become irretrievably damaged or disappear entirely. Therefore it is incumbent on all of us, as a community, to take responsibility for our actions and to take responsibility for the land by being good environmental stewards.

The NFP-Phase II helps us all do just that: be good environmental stewards. The NFP overlay requirement do not preclude the reasonable use of property, rather like all good zoning ordinances, they seek to prohibit ill thought-through development actions that destroy natural systems, and ultimately result in ugly, failed development projects due to, among other things, unanticipated structural damages, and the immense amount of money subsequently spent in futile, ongoing maintenance activities. There is a reason for the old adage “Don’t fight Mother Nature”. Rather as the famous planner once said – “Design with Nature”.

Further, as a home owner, I do not feel burdened by having my property placed under the NFP overlay zoning. Rather it gives my comfort that 40+ years from now the land that I have tended and been so fortunate to enjoy, will continue to be respected and nurtured by future generations.

I thank the volunteers of the NFP Review Board and City staff for their time, expertise, and commitment in crafting the NFP Phase II Map and ordinance changes. I believe that these documents are truly visionary and will represent a moment in time that we can all look back to with pride and gratitude.

Sincerely,

Diana Morton-Thompson

From: [Conway, Neal](#)
To: [McCarthy, Jamie](#); [Eldridge, Peter](#)
Subject: FW: [External Email] Support for NFP Phase 2
Date: Friday, June 18, 2021 9:34:12 AM

From: Donna Keller <rdawkeller@ameritech.net>
Sent: Thursday, June 17, 2021 5:51 PM
To: hello <hello@kalamazoocity.org>
Subject: [External Email] Support for NFP Phase 2

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
Donna Keller
Ilse Gebhard
David Riggs
Susan Creager
John Chenault
Laura Shaw
Pam Jackson

From: [Conway, Neal](#)
To: [Eldridge, Peter](#); [McCarthy, Jamie](#)
Subject: FW: [External Email] Natural Features Inventory
Date: Friday, June 18, 2021 3:50:23 PM

Neal Conway
Communications Coordinator
City of Kalamazoo
(269) 337-8080
conwayn@kalamazoocity.org
www.kalamazoocity.org

From: MELANIE J PERRY <perry1188@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Friday, June 18, 2021 3:24 PM
To: hello <hello@kalamazoocity.org>
Subject: [External Email] Natural Features Inventory

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.

From: [Conway, Neal](#)
To: [Eldridge, Peter](#); [McCarthy, Jamie](#)
Subject: FW: [External Email] Natural Features Protection
Date: Friday, June 18, 2021 3:50:40 PM

Neal Conway
Communications Coordinator
City of Kalamazoo
(269) 337-8080
conwayn@kalamazoocity.org
www.kalamazoocity.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Lyda J Stillwell <lyda.stillwell@wmich.edu>
Sent: Friday, June 18, 2021 2:35 PM
To: hello <hello@kalamazoocity.org>
Subject: [External Email] Natural Features Protection

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

From: [Conway, Neal](#)
To: [Eldridge, Peter](#); [McCarthy, Jamie](#)
Subject: FW: [External Email] NFP Review Board
Date: Monday, June 21, 2021 8:46:43 AM

Neal Conway
Communications Coordinator
City of Kalamazoo
(269) 337-8080
conwayn@kalamazoocity.org
www.kalamazoocity.org

From: Russ Schipper <schipper.russ@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 20, 2021 12:03 PM
To: hello <hello@kalamazoocity.org>
Subject: [External Email] NFP Review Board

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

From: [McCarthy, Jamie](#)
To: [Eldridge, Peter](#)
Subject: FW: [External Email] Natural Features Protection Ordinance
Date: Friday, June 18, 2021 1:13:29 PM

Looks like Sidney got your email address incorrect. Here you go.

From: Sidney Brush <sidney.brush@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 18, 2021 12:13 PM
To: McCarthy, Jamie <mccarthyja@kalamazoocity.org>
Cc: EldridgeP@kalamazooithy.org
Subject: [External Email] Natural Features Protection Ordinance

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

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

From: [Karin Larsen](#)
To: [McCarthy, Jamie](#)
Subject: [External Email] Planning Commission
Date: Sunday, June 13, 2021 8:42:54 AM

This is on your own site announcing the Environmental Planning Award given to our city for this work. It was not a stagnant award for the environment is in a constant state of change. Approving the NFP Phase II Map will not only create a sustainable future for our city but sets a standard for communities throughout the United States. The residents for this resolution far out weigh any negative objections.

This is the moment to create a future for our city and its children. A unanimous vote will make a strong statement about where the city and residents stand and would support the Climate Crisis Resolution passed by our city.

Sep 11 2020

[Natural Features Protection Initiative Wins MAP Award as Overlay Work Continues](#)

The City of Kalamazoo's Natural Features Protection (NFP) initiative has been awarded the Environmental Planning Award by the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP/APA Michigan). The Award recognizes "efforts to create more sustainable and greener communities that reduce the impact of development on the natural environment and improve environmental quality." This award comes as City staff work to further refine natural features protection in the city through a second phase of the NFP initiative.

During the most recent Master Plan update, residents made clear their desire for protection and preservation of natural features. In December 2018, the Kalamazoo City Commission approved a moratorium on building permits for properties with the Natural Features Protection designation in the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan. This moratorium was enacted to provide City staff time to create an NFP ordinance in collaboration with community members.

Thank you,

Karin Larsen

Karin Larsen
karinlarsen@mediopic.com

May we come to know all people as the Chosen one. All the Earth as our Holy Land. -F.
MacEowen

From: [Rochelle Habeck](#)
To: [McCarthy, Jamie](#)
Cc: [COK - Development Center](#); [hello](#)
Subject: [External Email] Support for NFP Work and Overlay Revision
Date: Monday, June 21, 2021 10:04:10 AM

Dear Ms. McCarthy, NFP Advisors, and City Planning Directors,

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
269-341-0381