Toolkit:

Contacts database

There are several agencies and organizations that either serve the watershed or provide educational resources. A comprehensive list of these groups is provided, along with the websites of various programs currently underway to enhance, restore or protect local resources.

Communication letters

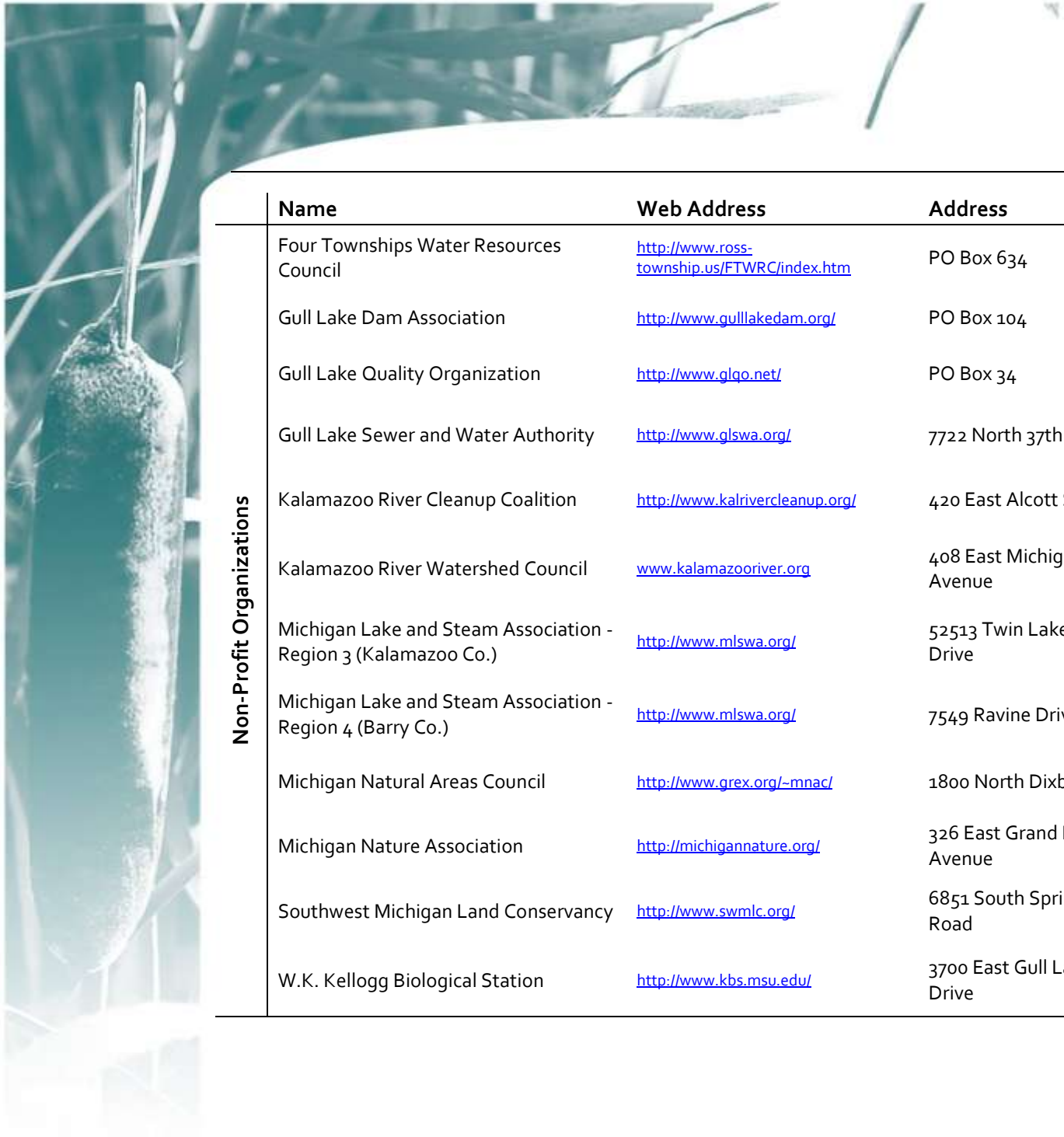
Michigan Planning law requires coordination during master plan updates, but not during zoning amendments. Template letters are provided to communicate changes in local ordinances and plans that may affect the watershed. Templates are also provided to convene annual or semi-annual meetings, and communicate when initiating a master plan update.

Site plan review flow chart

A recommended review process is provided to ensure ongoing coordination of development reviews within the watershed. It includes submittals to the County Drain Commissioner for their review, and a courtesy copy to the other townships when developments fall within the watershed.

Site plan review requirements and standards

Zoning law in Michigan states that site plans meeting the strict letter of the ordinance must be approved. However, many communities forget that site plan approval is based on adherence to a set of quality standards, in addition to the more specific dimensional requirements. Examples of site plan review standards are provided to show how each township (and Barry County) can increase the level of consideration given to the environment during development reviews with simple changes to the site plan review standards that do not require a comprehensive audit of each local zoning ordinance.



	Name	Web Address	Address	City, State, Zip	Phone
Non-Profit Organizations	Four Townships Water Resources Council	http://www.ross-township.us/FTWRC/index.htm	PO Box 634	Richland, MI 49083	
	Gull Lake Dam Association	http://www.gulllakedam.org/	PO Box 104	Richland, MI 49083	
	Gull Lake Quality Organization	http://www.glqo.net/	PO Box 34	Hickory Corners, MI 49060	
	Gull Lake Sewer and Water Authority	http://www.glswa.org/	7722 North 37th Street	Richland, MI 49083	(269) 731-4595
	Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition	http://www.kalrivercleanup.org/	420 East Alcott Street	Kalamazoo, MI 49001	(269) 382-0490
	Kalamazoo River Watershed Council	www.kalamazooriver.org	408 East Michigan Avenue	Kalamazoo, MI 49007	(269) 978-4606
	Michigan Lake and Steam Association - Region 3 (Kalamazoo Co.)	http://www.mlswa.org/	52513 Twin Lakeshore Drive	Dowagiac, MI 49047	(269) 782-3319
	Michigan Lake and Steam Association - Region 4 (Barry Co.)	http://www.mlswa.org/	7549 Ravine Drive NE	Belding, MI 48809	(616) 691-7057
	Michigan Natural Areas Council	http://www.grex.org/~mnac/	1800 North Dixboro	Ann Arbor, MI 48109-9741	
	Michigan Nature Association	http://michigannature.org/	326 East Grand River Avenue	Williamston, MI 48895	(517) 655-5655
	Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy	http://www.swmlc.org/	6851 South Sprinkle Road	Portage, MI 49002	(269) 324-1600
	W.K. Kellogg Biological Station	http://www.kbs.msu.edu/	3700 East Gull Lake Drive	Hickory Corners, MI 49060	(269) 671-2263

Municipalities	Barry County Planning Commission (Barry Township)	http://www.barrycounty.org/county-departments/planning-and-zoning/	220 West State Street	Hastings, MI 49058	(269) 945-1290
	Barry Township	http://www.barrycounty.org/townships/townships/barry/	PO Box 705	Delton, MI 49046	(269) 623-5171
	Kalamazoo County Planning Commission	http://www.kalcounty.com/planning/index.htm	201 West Kalamazoo Avenue	Kalamazoo, MI 49007	(269) 384-8112
	Prairieville Township Planning Commission	http://www.prairievilletwp-mi.org/p&z.php	10115 South Norris Road	Delton, MI 49046	(269) 623-2664
	Richland Township Planning Commission	http://www.richlandtwp.net	7401 North 32nd Street	Richland, MI 49083	(269) 629-4921
	Ross Township Planning Commission	http://www.ross-township.us/	12086 M-89	Richland, MI 49083	(269) 731-4888
	Village of Richland Planning Commission	http://www.kalcounty.com/directory/villageofrichland.htm	8100 North 32nd Street	Richland, MI 49083	(269) 629-9903
Government Agencies	Barry Conservation District	http://www.barrycd.org/	1611 South Hanover, Suite 105	Hastings, MI 49058	(269) 948-8056
	Barry County Drain Commission	http://www.barrycounty.org/county-departments/drain-commissioner	220 West State Street	Hastings, MI 49058	(269) 945-1385
	Barry County Road Commission	http://www.barrycrc.org/	1725 West M-43 Hwy.	Hastings, MI 49058	(269) 945-3449
	Kalamazoo Conservation District	http://www.kalamazooconservation.org/index.html	1911 West Centre Avenue	Portage, MI 49204	(269) 327-1258
	Kalamazoo County Drain Commission	http://www.kalcounty.com/drain/index.htm	201 West Kalamazoo Avenue	Kalamazoo, MI 49007	(269) 384-8117
	Kalamazoo County Road Commission	http://www.kcrc-roads.com/	3801 East Kilgore Road	Kalamazoo, MI 49001	(269) 381-3171
	MDNRE – Grand Rapids Office (serving Barry Co.)		350 Ottawa Ave., NW, Unit 10	Grand Rapids, MI 49503	(616) 356-0500
	MDNRE – Kalamazoo Office (serving Kalamazoo Co.)		7953 Adobe Road	Kalamazoo, MI 49009	(269) 567-3500
	South Central Michigan Planning Council		PO Box 2137	Portage, MI 49081	(269) 323-0045

COMMUNICATION LETTERS

Coordination among the four townships is critical to implementing consistent watershed protection regulations in the Gull Lake area. The following letters are intended to provide a means for continued coordination and communication between the four townships.

Contents:

- **Annual Meeting Communication Letters.** The Planning Commissions of the four townships should meet regularly to discuss pertinent water quality issues and the continued protection of the watershed. Any of the four communities could organize this annual meeting and develop the agenda, or it could be done by another organization like the Gull Lake Quality Organization, MSU Extension, County Soil Erosion Office, or other agency interested in maintaining water and resource quality. The letter provided is a template that can be used to invite and schedule the joint meeting of the township Planning Commissions.

- **Master Plan Communication Letters.** As required in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, each of the four townships must notify all adjoining communities, the county planning commission, regional planning agency and any registered utilities when they embark on a master plan update or adopt a new master plan. The following letters are intended to provide a template for such communication:
  - Notice of Intent to Prepare a Master Plan Update
  - Sample Distribution Letter

- **Zoning Amendment Communication Letter.** The following letters can be used as a template when any of the four townships update their zoning ordinance or begin any planning process or activity that may affect the entire watershed.

ANNUAL COORDINATION MEETING LETTER

[INSERT HOST TOWNSHIP OR ORGANIZATION]
[INSERT HOST'S ADDRESS]

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT PLANNING COMMISSION RECIPIENT NAME]
[INSERT RECIPIANT ADDRESS]

Dear **[INSERT CONTACT NAME]**,

The **[INSERT HOST TOWNSHIP OR ORGANIZATION]** is organizing a joint meeting of the Planning Commissions for Barry Prairieville, Richland, and Ross Townships to discuss common water quality issues in the Gull Lake Watershed. The meeting will be hosted by:

[INSERT HOST TOWNSHIP OR ORGANIZATION]
[INSERT MEETING DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION]

Your attendance at this meeting is requested to ensure continued protection of the watershed. If you are not able to attend the meeting, please feel free to send any comments, questions, or concerns regarding water quality issues in the watershed to the **[INSERT HOST TOWNSHIP OR ORGANIZATION CONTACT]** and they will be addressed during the meeting.

Thank you for your continued participation in and efforts to protect the Gull Lake Watershed.

Best Regards,

[INSERT HOST TOWNSHIP OR ORGANIZATION CONTACT]

NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE A MASTER PLAN [AMENDMENT]

[DATE]

[This notice must be sent to:

- **The Planning Commission of each adjoining local community**
- **County Planning Commission**
- **Any utility or railroad companies registered with the Clerk to receive public notices]**

Dear **[insert agency name]:**

In accordance with the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, as amended, this letter serves as notice that **[insert agency name],** is initiating process of **[amending OR updating]** its Master Plan.

Later in the process, the Township will be sending a draft of the Master Plan **[amendment]** for your review and comment, as required by the Act. We would appreciate your comments regarding the Plan's content and your thoughts regarding how it may affect planning efforts in your community.

[insert community name] thanks you in advance for your cooperation and assistance. We appreciate the input and look forward to continuing a cooperative relationship and can assure you of our cooperation in a similar fashion to any planning efforts you may choose to undertake in the years to come. Please direct any correspondence or questions to:

Planning and Zoning Department
[insert community name]
[insert community address and contact information]

Sincerely,

[insert sender's name]

MASTER PLAN DISTRIBUTION LETTER

[DATE]

[ADDRESS]

[THIS NOTICE MUST BE SENT TO:

- **The Planning Commission of each adjoining local communities**
- **County Planning Commission**
- **Any utility or railroad companies registered with the Clerk to receive public notices]**

Re: Draft Master Plan **[AMENDMENT]**

Dear **[INSERT AGENCY NAME]**,

The **[INSERT COMMUNITY NAME]** is submitting a copy of the draft Master Plan amendment for your review. It is anticipated that, if adopted, this Plan will be incorporated into the Master Plan for **[INSERT COMMUNITY NAME]** as a Master Plan amendment**.** The draft is also being distributed to surrounding municipalities in accordance with Section 41 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008). According to the Act, before a municipality adopts a new Master Plan or updates thereto, it must first send a draft copy of the Master Plan to all contiguous local governments, as well as the County for their review and comment.

According to the Act, the various municipalities and agencies have **[INSERT TIMEFRAME (42 days for an amendment or 63 days for a comprehensive update)]** to review and submit comments on this Master Plan amendment to **[INSERT COMMUNITY NAME]** and the County (if they choose to do so). Any comments should be submitted in writing to:

[INSERT COMMUNITY CONTACT NAME]
[INSERT MAILING ADDRESS AND/OR E-MAIL ADDRESS]

Thank you for your participation in this matter.

Regards,

Planning Commission Secretary

TEMPLATE LETTER FOR ZONING AMENDMENTS

[INSERT SENDING TOWNSHIP NAME & ADDRESS]

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT RECEIVING TOWNSHIP'S NAME] Planning Commission
[INSERT RECEIVING TOWNSHIP ADDRESS]

Re: **[INSERT SUBJECT OF LETTER]**

Dear **[INSERT CONTACT NAME OR RECEIVING TOWNSHIP Planning Commission],**

This letter is to inform you that **[INSERT SENDING TOWNSHIP NAME]** has initiated changes to its zoning ordinance. The purpose of the amendments is to **[INSERT SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE OR ITS REGULATORY EFFECT]**. Given our common vision of protecting the Gull Lake Watershed, we invite you to review the proposed changes (enclosed) and provide your comments and concerns. We also would like to invite you to attend future meetings to discuss and comment on the changes. The **[INSERT SENDING TOWNSHIP NAME]** Planning Commission will meet to discuss these amendments on:

[INSERT MEETING DATE, TIME AND LOCATION]

If you are not able to attend the meeting, please feel free to send any comments, questions, or concerns regarding the proposed changes to the address listed above. Alternatively, you may email any comments to **[INSERT SENDING TOWNSHIP EMAIL ADDRESS].**

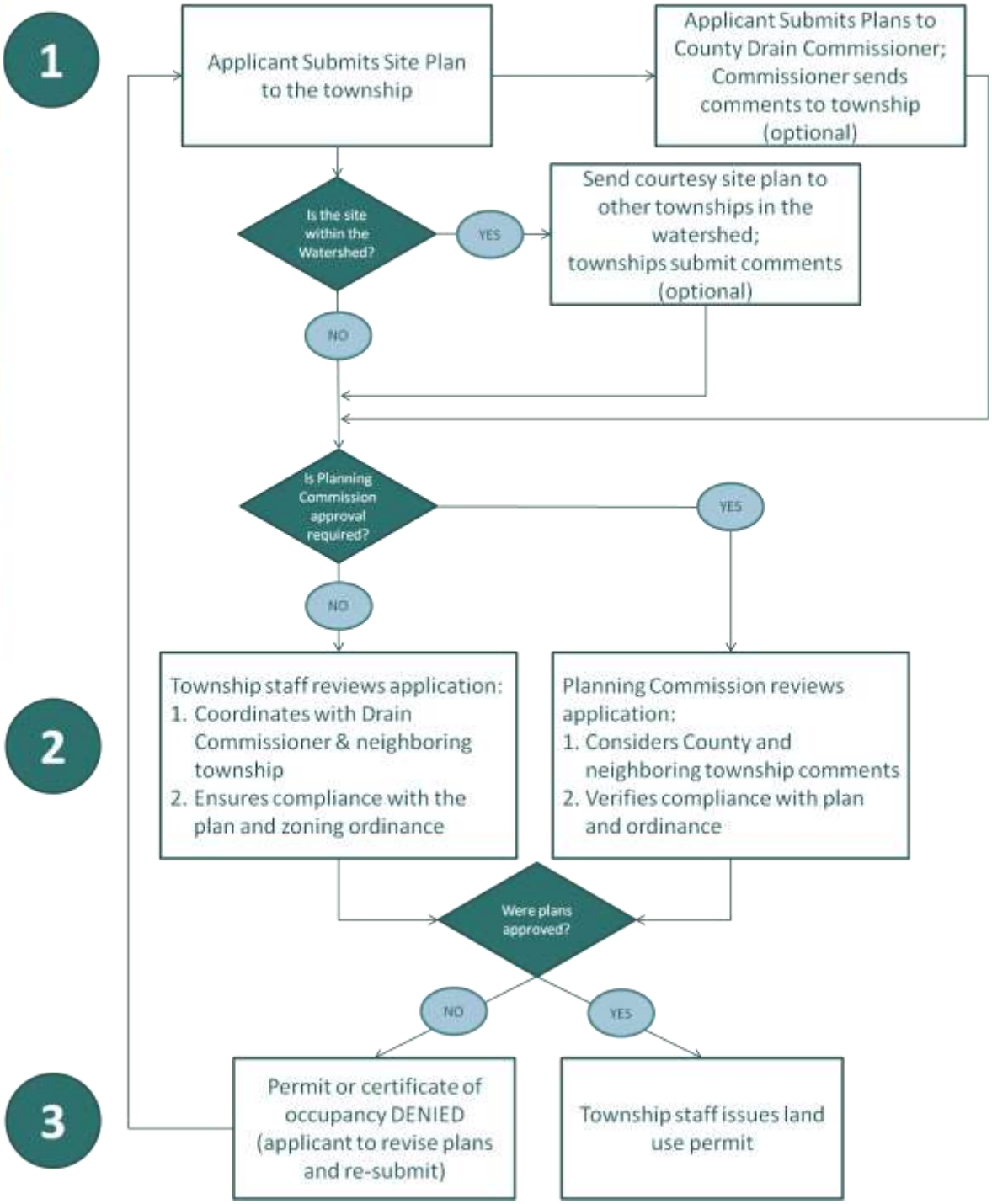
Thank you for taking the time to review our proposed changes. We look forward to our continued collaborative preservation of the Gull Lake Watershed.

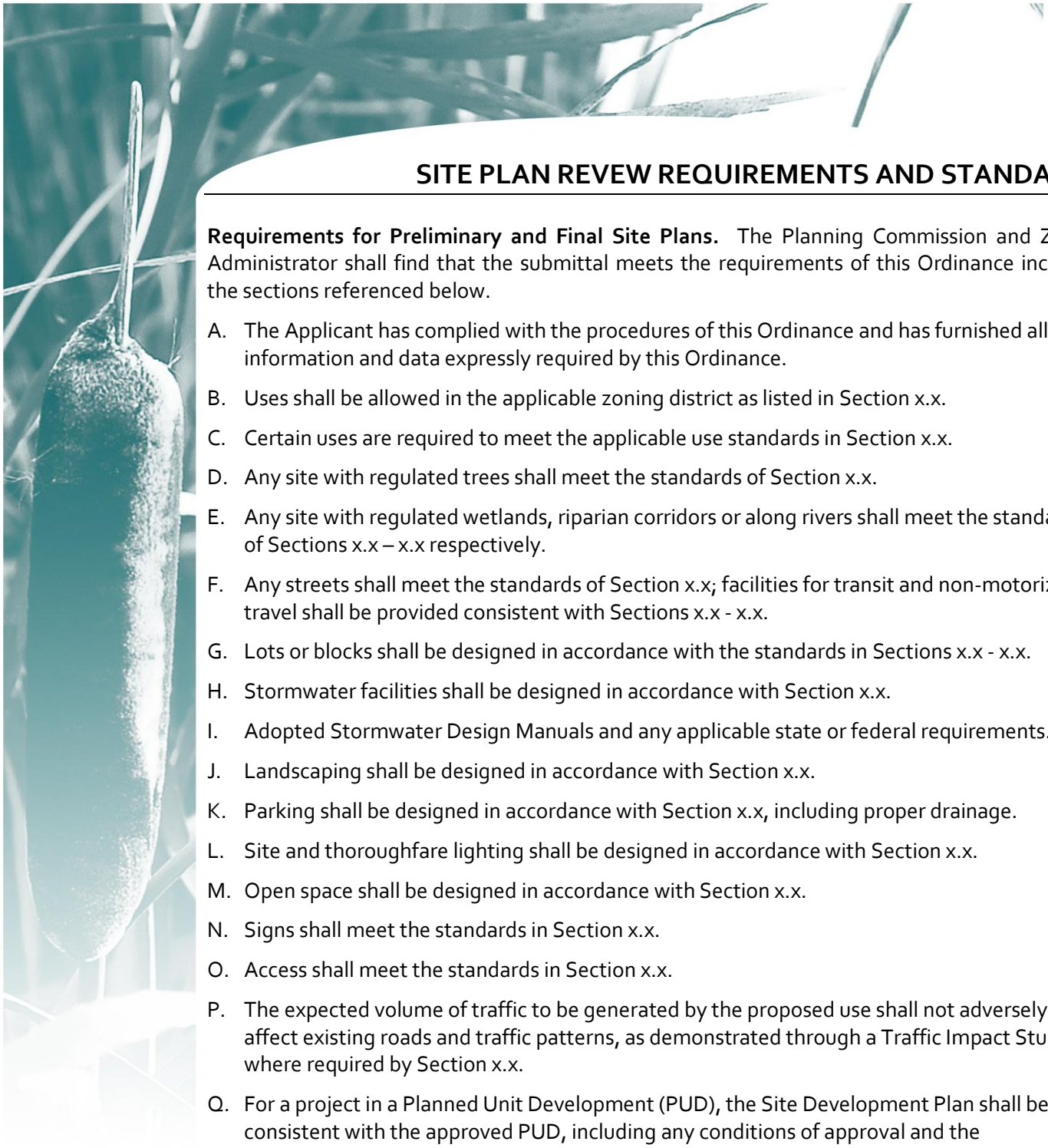
Best Regards,

[INSERT SENDING TOWNSHIP CONTACT]

SITE PLAN REVIEW FLOW CHART

The Flow chart below shows the suggested path of development plans as they flow through the review process. It is intended to involve the County Drain Commissioner and include courtesy reviews by the four townships when reviewing plans within the Gull Lake Watershed.





SITE PLAN REVEW REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS

Requirements for Preliminary and Final Site Plans. The Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator shall find that the submittal meets the requirements of this Ordinance including the sections referenced below.

A. The Applicant has complied with the procedures of this Ordinance and has furnished all information and data expressly required by this Ordinance.

B. Uses shall be allowed in the applicable zoning district as listed in Section x.x.

C. Certain uses are required to meet the applicable use standards in Section x.x.

D. Any site with regulated trees shall meet the standards of Section x.x.

E. Any site with regulated wetlands, riparian corridors or along rivers shall meet the standards of Sections x.x – x.x respectively.

F. Any streets shall meet the standards of Section x.x; facilities for transit and non-motorized travel shall be provided consistent with Sections x.x - x.x.

G. Lots or blocks shall be designed in accordance with the standards in Sections x.x - x.x.

H. Stormwater facilities shall be designed in accordance with Section x.x.

I. Adopted Stormwater Design Manuals and any applicable state or federal requirements.

J. Landscaping shall be designed in accordance with Section x.x.

K. Parking shall be designed in accordance with Section x.x, including proper drainage.

L. Site and thoroughfare lighting shall be designed in accordance with Section x.x.

M. Open space shall be designed in accordance with Section x.x.

N. Signs shall meet the standards in Section x.x.

O. Access shall meet the standards in Section x.x.

P. The expected volume of traffic to be generated by the proposed use shall not adversely affect existing roads and traffic patterns, as demonstrated through a Traffic Impact Study where required by Section x.x.

Q. For a project in a Planned Unit Development (PUD), the Site Development Plan shall be consistent with the approved PUD, including any conditions of approval and the requirements of the Development Agreement.

R. Any project approved with incentives in Article X shall be consistent with those standards.

S. A Final Site Plan shall also include the following:

   1. The Applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated his ability and intent to complete the proposed development and to meet all obligations agreed to or incurred as a result of conformance with this Ordinance, within a reasonable time period and in accordance with all conditions of the permit;

   2. The Applicant has established adequate legal safeguards to ensure compliance with the approved Development Plan and to provide for adequate management of the development regardless of future ownership or control of the land or facilities thereon;

3. The Applicant has provided development sureties as described in Section x.x and legal guarantee (where applicable) of the installation and maintenance of water systems, sewer systems, drainage systems, street systems, open space areas, and any other improvements indicated in lieu of actual construction of improvements prior to final approval. This shall include a letter of commitment or acceptance by the applicable county or other agency.
4. Where phasing is proposed, the phase that Final PUD Development Plan approval is requested shall be designed in a manner that allows it to fully function on its own regarding services, utilities, circulation, facilities, and open space irrespective of the completion of other phases of the PUD;
5. For all time sharing (internal ownership) units, the Applicant must show, prior to commencement of sales, a Financial Plan demonstrating its capacity to fund maintenance and other preferred services.
6. Any required impact fees have been submitted.

Standards for Site Plan Approval. Based upon the following standards, the Planning Commission may recommend approval, approval with conditions or denial of the site plan:

A. **Preservation of Significant Natural Features**. Judicious effort shall be used to preserve the integrity of the land, existing topography, and natural features, in particular woodlands, MDEQ-designated/regulated wetlands, and, to a lesser extent, wetlands which are not regulated by the MDEQ.

B. **Soil Erosion Control.** The site shall have adequate lateral support so as to ensure that there will be no erosion of soil or other material. The final determination as to adequacy of, or need for, lateral support shall be made by the City Engineer.

C. **Utilities.** Public water and sewer facilities shall be available or shall be provided for by the developer as part of the site development, where such systems are available.

D. **Stormwater Management.** Appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure that removal of surface waters will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the public storm drainage system. Provisions shall be made to accommodate stormwater which complements the natural drainage patterns and wetlands, prevent erosion and the formation of dust. Sharing of stormwater facilities with adjacent properties shall be encouraged. The use of detention/retention ponds may be required. Surface water on all paved areas shall be collected at intervals so that it will not obstruct the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic or create standing water.

E. **Hazardous Materials or Waste**. For businesses utilizing, storing or handling hazardous material such as automobile service and automobile repair stations, automobile body repair stations, dry cleaning plants, metal plating industries, and other industrial uses, documentation of compliance with state and federal requirements shall be provided.

F. **General**. All elements of the site plan shall be designed to take into account the site's topography, existing historical and architectural features, the size and type of plot, the character of adjoining property and the traffic operations of adjacent streets. The site shall be developed so as not to impede the normal and orderly development or improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in this Article.

G. **Building Design**. The building design shall relate to the surrounding environment in regard to texture, scale, mass, proportion, and color. High standards of construction and quality materials will be incorporated into the new development in accordance with the requirements of *Section x.x Non-residential Development Requirements*.

H. **Landscaping**. The landscape shall be preserved in its natural state, insofar as practical, by removing only those areas of vegetation or making those alterations to the topography which are reasonably necessary to develop the site in accordance with the requirements of this Article. Landscaping shall be preserved and/or provided to ensure that proposed uses will be adequately buffered from one another and from surrounding public and private property. Landscaping, landscape buffers and greenbelts shall be provided and designed in accordance with the provisions of *ARTICLE X LANDSCAPE STANDARDS AND TREE REPLACEMENT*.

I. **Transportation System**. To the degree practicable, the site plan shall reflect the Complete Streets policies and requirements adopted in the Master Plan and by resolution or ordinance. As applicable, the plan shall accommodate all legal users of the transportation system and shall provide for non-motorized access and circulation. Pathways, sidewalks and other non-motorized routes that terminate at site boundaries or are planned to be extended across or through the subject property shall be reflected on the plan.

1. **Streets.** All streets shall be developed in accordance with the *Township Subdivision Control Ordinance* and construction standards, unless developed as a private road in accordance with the requirements of *Section x.x Private Road Standards*.

2. **Access, Driveways and Circulation.** Safe, convenient, uncongested, and well defined vehicular and pedestrian circulation within and to the site shall be provided and shall meet the following criteria:

   a. Drives, streets, parking and other elements shall be designed to discourage through traffic, while promoting safe and efficient traffic operations within the site and at its access points.

   b. All driveways shall meet the design and construction standards of the City.

   c. Access to the site shall be designed to minimize conflicts with traffic on adjacent streets, particularly left turns into and from the site.

   d. For uses having frontage and/or access on a major traffic route, as defined in the Township Master Plan, the number, design, and location of access driveways and other provisions for vehicular circulation shall comply with the provisions of *ARTICLE X ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND DRIVEWAY STANDARDS.*

3. **Emergency Vehicle Access**. All buildings or groups of buildings shall be arranged so as to permit necessary emergency vehicle access as required by the City fire and police departments.

4. **Sidewalks, Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation**

   a. The arrangement of public or common ways for vehicular and pedestrian circulation shall be connected to existing or planned streets and sidewalks/pedestrian or bicycle pathways in the area in accordance with *Section x.x Sidewalks, Bikepaths and Other Pedestrian Pathways*.

   b. A pedestrian circulation system shall be separated from vehicular circulation system.

   c. In order to ensure public safety, special pedestrian measures, such as crosswalks, crossing signals and other such facilities may be required in the vicinity of primary and secondary schools, playgrounds, local shopping areas, fast food/service restaurants and other high traffic areas of pedestrians or bicycles.

5. **Barrier-free Access**. The site has been designed to provide barrier-free parking and pedestrian circulation.

J. **Parking.** The number and dimensions of off-street parking spaces shall be sufficient to meet the minimum required by *ARTICLE X PARKING AND LOADING-UNLOADING STANDARDS*. However, where warranted by overlapping or shared parking arrangements, the Planning Commission or City Council may reduce the required number of parking spaces as permitted in *Section x.x. Collective Parking and Section x.x. Parking Lot Deferment.*

K. **Loading and Storage**. All loading and unloading areas and outside storage areas shall be screened as determined by the Planning Commission in accordance with *ARTICLE X LANDSCAPE STANDARDS AND TREE REPLACEMENT.*

L. **Lighting.** Exterior lighting, in accordance with *ARTICLE X LIGHTING STANDARDS*, shall be arranged so that it is deflected away from adjacent properties and so that it does not impede the vision of traffic along adjacent streets. Flashing or intermittent lights shall not be permitted.

M. **Noise**. The site has been designed, buildings so arranged, and activities/equipment programmed to minimize the emission of noise, particularly for sites adjacent to residential districts.

N. **Mechanical Equipment and Utilities.** Mechanical equipment and utilities, roof, building and ground mounted, shall be screened in accordance with the requirements of *Section x.x Mechanical Equipment and Utilities.*

O. **Waste Receptacles**. Waste receptacles shall be provided as required in *Section x.x Waste Receptacles and Enclosures*.

P. **Signs**. The standards of *ARTICLE X SIGNS* must be met.

Q. **Other Agency Reviews**. The applicant has provided documentation of compliance with other appropriate agency review standards, including, but not limited to, the MDNRE, MDOT, County Drain Commission, County Health Department, and other Federal and State agencies, as applicable.