

January 13, 2017

To: John Robert Smith
Senior Policy Advisor, Smart Growth America

Re: Royal Oak Progress Report

Dear Mr. Smith:

Smart Growth America (SGA), in partnership with Clarion Associates, completed a sustainable land use code audit for the City of Royal Oak in July 2016. This audit covered three main topics – stormwater management, green infrastructure, and housing diversity – and was the focus of an all-day workshop in Royal Oak on October 5, 2016.

After receiving feedback from Royal Oak city staff, a final “next steps” memo was released on November 16th, 2016. This memo was circulated to the attendees of the October workshop, in addition to the city commission and multiple boards and task forces, including the Stormwater Task Force and the Environmental Advisory Board.

On January 14, 2017, senior-level city staff will be participating with the city commission on an all-day goals and objectives session. SGA’s stormwater findings and recommendations for a tree ordinance will be discussed as part of this exercise. A target housing assessment study is currently underway. It is anticipated the city will be revising its stormwater ordinance in 2017, and SGA’s recommendations will help anchor this conversation on the 14th.

Drafts of a possible tree ordinance have been the subject of feedback for the past month. When comparing our proposed ordinance to SGA’s recommendations, the following was noted with regard to SGA’s next steps memo:

What the report does well:

1. Understand the importance of green infrastructure
2. Recommends giving credit to developments for using green infrastructure
3. Recommends the promotion of green infrastructure on private property
4. Recommends educational efforts to promote green infrastructure
5. Recommends the protection of trees on private property
 - a. Cites the city’s current “modest” protection standards and argues they must be strengthened
 - b. Recommends Clayton, MO as a case study – the city fully agrees

What the report misses:

1. The report functions as a very cursory review of Royal Oak’s trees and tree needs. While lacking depth, it does give strong initial advice on where Royal Oak needs to go
2. The report argues canopy coverage needs to be protected, but doesn’t mention that it also needs to be increased

Royal Oak is committed to being one of Michigan's most vibrant and sustainable communities, and I look forward to sharing with you in our next report the sustainable goals and objectives adopted at the January 14th session and our proposed implementation plan. Again, we thank you for the hard work and subject matter expertise that SGA has brought which will help us reach our "smart growth" goals.

Sincerely,

Todd E. Fenton
Economic Development Manager