

**Subject:** Understanding on Land Use and Protection of Prairie Habitat

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**From:** Praveena Ramaswami

**Sent:** Friday, May 23, 2025 11:46 AM

**To:** Watson, Chris <CWatson@a2gov.org>; Mallek, Jon <JMallek@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>

**Subject:** Understanding on Land Use and Protection of Prairie Habitat

City of Ann Arbor Planning Department,

I am writing as a follow-up to my emails with our city council ward 2 representatives to better understand the land use for this parcel, which has been confirmed as a right-of-way (ROW) parcel.

Historically, a road was constructed on this parcel in the 1960s when the neighborhood was developed, but it was removed around the mid-1980s. Since then, the community has transformed and maintained this area as a Prairie habitat for over four decades. It now serves as an important natural ecosystem for wildlife, soil stabilization, and environmental education learning, as it is considered part of the Thurston Nature Center. The Thurston Nature Center Committee has conducted controlled burns on this site for many years (including this year), with the City's approval and in coordination with the Ann Arbor Fire Department.

The city may be aware that the Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) have proposed building a road on this parcel. However, public records indicate that AAPS does not own this land. Given that the City removed the original road, does the parcel now fall under City ownership by default? If so, should the [City's Natural Features Master Plan](#) —specifically Section 6— apply to this parcel?

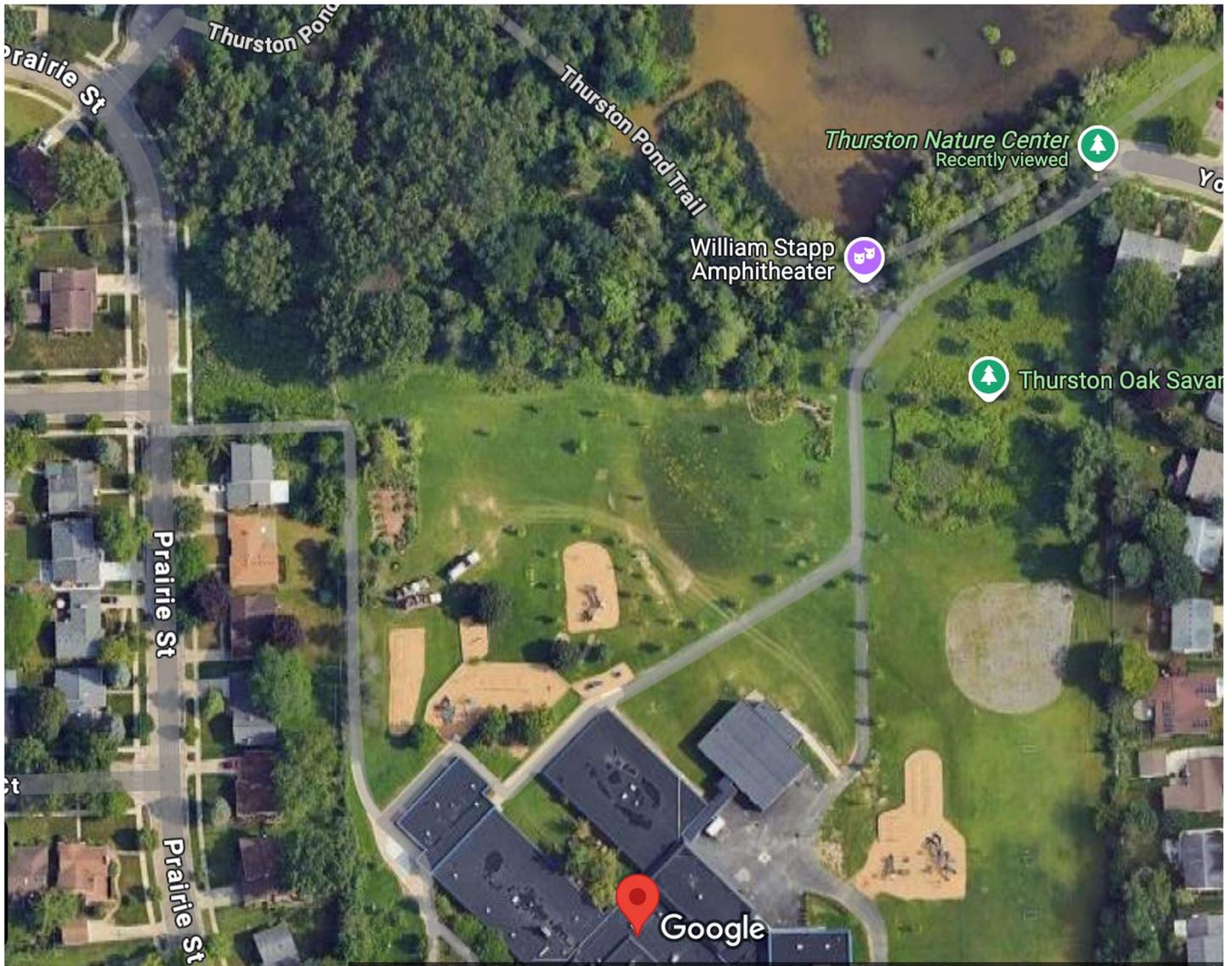
I want to ensure that the City and the Planning Department are fully informed of AAPS's intentions to develop on what appears to be City-owned property, which is currently a functioning and valued Prairie habitat. I have attached a photo from the 2300 Prairie St, Ann Arbor parcel to show the most recent from Google Maps and one from approximately 1973 showing the road on this parcel.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your clarification and guidance.

Thank you,

Praveena Ramaswami

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On May 7, 2025, at 7:08 PM, Praveena Ramaswami wrote:

Thank you for your response. The Thurston Nature Center has maintained the land as a Prairie habitat for a few decades.

If the city owns this land, that Prairie maybe under [City's Natural Features Master Plan](#) (section 6) which lists Praires as protected.

AAPS plans to build a road upon this land that would be an emergency access road for the city.

Can I contact the City Attorney's Office, or must I go through you both?

I added my original email from 4/21/25 at the bottom for you to refer to.

Thank you,

Praveena Ramaswami

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On May 7, 2025, at 5:33 PM, Watson, Chris <[CWatson@a2gov.org](mailto:CWatson@a2gov.org)> wrote:

Hi Praveena,

Jon and I passed along your question about the unlabeled parcel near Thurston and got this response from staff:

*Looks like this land is currently just a ROW for Renfrew St. It was platted as part of North Campus Heights 3 plat.*

*It appears that when AAPS bought the unplatted property (to the East) that is Thurston now the ROW was never vacated. It's not parcel land so It's not part of Parks or AAPS. It's just a ROW for the City. I'm not sure who maintains it.*

*As ROW it would be appropriate to discuss with the City Attorney's office and PSA what is allowed and not.*

From looking at the site plan and approvals, it appears Public Services Area (PSA) and Fire Marshal intend the ROW to be fire lane access.

Best,

Chris

Chris Watson  
Ann Arbor City Council Member, Ward 2  
(734)436-1504  
*Sent from mobile, please excuse any typos*

Councilman Mallek and Councilman Watson,

I hope this message finds you well.

I was reviewing the [Ann Arbor City Parcel GIS](#) and noticed that there is a grey-shaded portion of Prairie Street that does not list an owner. It appears this land may be city property rather than belonging to AAPS. The Thurston Nature Center has long maintained this area as a [native prairie habitat](#).

The Lead Steward of the Thurston Nature Center mentioned that this area may be included in the City's Natural Features Master Plan, which references prairie habitats (see Section 6) in its protection measures:

[https://www.a2gov.org/media/u1qjduh/nfmasterplan\\_6-04.pdf](https://www.a2gov.org/media/u1qjduh/nfmasterplan_6-04.pdf)

I believe AAPS' development plans for the new Thurston Elementary include utilizing this entire property for their service drive. I wanted to ensure that the appropriate city departments were aware, in case this is indeed city-owned land and/or covered by the city's natural features protections.

Would you be able to direct me to someone who can confirm the ownership of this parcel, and whether it is included under the City's Natural Features ordinance or protections?

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Praveena Ramaswami  
Bromley Neighborhood Resident

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