City of Ann Arbor Stormwater Comprehensive Plan

Focus Group Meeting with University of Michigan

January 12, 2026

Attendance: 4 U of M Staff / 5 City Staff / 1 Consultant Staff

U of M Staff: Dana Wilkinson, Anne Thomas, Sven Sawin, and Anya Dale

City Staff: Jennifer Lawson, Skye Stewart, Peter Stephens, Jasmine Isaac-Ofori, and Katie Dillon

Consultant Staff: Jenna Troppman

Meeting Overview

The City convened this meeting with University of Michigan staff to gather input on campus stormwater practices and coordination needs to inform the Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan. Discussion focused on the integration of stormwater management with campus planning and development, flooding definitions and risk areas, increasing rainfall intensity, use of nature-based solutions, and the importance of ongoing coordination between the City and University on shared watershed impacts and capital planning.

General Comments

- Stormwater management on campus is closely tied to campus planning, permitting, and long-term development goals, with an emphasis on ensuring current projects do not constrain future growth. Pollution prevention remains a core focus, primarily addressed through Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control practices.
- The University is increasingly considering regional stormwater solutions, especially in redevelopment areas like North Campus, while relying on more site-specific strategies in denser, built-out areas (ex. tree root revitalization and redirecting runoff to green spaces).
- Flooding is generally understood as water creating safety concerns or entering unintended areas. Perceptions of flooding are subjective, and temporary ponding may be acceptable in some areas, though there is no formal campus-wide duration standard.
- Participants noted awareness of increasing rainfall intensity, with particular concern for creeks and erosion-prone areas.
- Certain areas of campus (ex. Athletic Campus and Central Campus) are more susceptible to flooding due to site conditions, including high water tables, proximity to floodplains, and development density.

- The University aims to address stormwater concerns equitably across campus, with strategic prioritization of the medical campus to maintain essential functions.
- Stormwater considerations are incorporated into individual capital projects based on feasibility and opportunity, with efforts to exceed minimum regulatory requirements and, where possible, create capacity for future development.
- Nature-based solutions are routinely evaluated during planning, though site constraints can limit implementation. Larger-scale landscape conversions have been identified as more feasible than smaller installations near buildings.
- A campus ecosystem assessment is underway to identify habitats, green space, and stormwater capacity in areas anticipated for future development.

Next Steps

- Collaboration and coordination between the University and City were emphasized as critical, particularly in aligning capital improvement schedules, addressing shared watershed impacts, and prioritizing investments that maximize safety, erosion control, and long-term value.
- Establish regular coordination meetings between the City and University to review priorities, planning, and project implementation.