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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Surface Oil Drilling Leases Recorded Adjacent to Rochester Hills Community Schools

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Rochester Hills, MI

Don't Drill the Hills, Inc (DDH) has discovered "surface entry" leases that allow oil & gas well rigs at three Rochester Hills properties ([950 Adams Road](#), [974 Adams Road](#), and [2965 Tienken Road](#)) zoned single-family residential. These sites are located adjacent to **Rochester Adams High School** and **Van Hoosen Middle School** at the intersection of Tienken & Adams Roads. A [surface entry lease next to Musson Elementary](#) was recorded earlier this year.

This discovery runs completely counter to Rochester Hills Mayor Barnett's claims that oil companies have "no interest" in the area, and Councilman Tisdell's emphatic insistence there are no surface leases in Rochester Hills. In fact, West Bay Exploration (WBE) has been actively filing well site documents *this year* for locations *within* the City of Rochester Hills.

TIMING AND PROXIMITY ARE SIGNIFICANT

These oil & gas surface entry leases were signed February 15, 2013. On January 15, 2013, Mayor Barnett signed the [City's oil lease](#) for **adjacent park lands** as well as a cemetery near Stoney Creek High School. Since acquiring certain acreage is necessary to obtain an oil drilling permit, the City's park leases facilitated a **domino effect** for these surface drilling leases. This consequence was explained by Jordan Exploration VP Ben Brower, at the December 3, 2012 Rochester Hills City Council meeting, explaining that the city signing their lease "would give the company the right to pool those lands with properties next door."

CITY WAS NOTIFIED OF POTENTIAL WELL SITES IN 2012

At that same meeting, Brower noted two potential rig sites: the "71 acres of school property" at the corner of Tienken & Adams (Adams High School and Van Hoosen Middle School) as well as adjacent private properties – "10 acres on the Southeast corner of Tienken & Adams". These properties, now with unoccupied homes, are the very properties signed for surface leases allowing for oil & gas rig placement – adjacent to our city schools, city parks, and high density residential areas.

MAYOR'S RUSH TO SIGN OIL DRILLING LEASES

DDH member Gail Hammill questions: "Given the City was notified of well site interest in school/residential areas, why was Mayor Barnett in a rush to sign without first seeking resident input, engaging Rochester..."



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...Community Schools and the Fire Department to talk about safety?" Hammill adds: "With proximity to schools and high density neighborhoods, I don't see how oil and gas wells would be helpful to home values or already declining school enrollment."

Another resident and DDH member, Denise Doyle, adds: "Residents have fought for years to have a say in these decisions affecting our residential areas, even amending the City Charter in 2011 to ensure a vote on such leases- Is it credible for the Mayor and Council members to act surprised that residents expected a Charter stipulated public vote before approving an oil and gas lease? It seems **a hallmark of this administration: sign first, ask questions later.**"

Although Mayor Barnett recently claimed "the oil issue is dead", these leases still exist. Even with current low oil prices, this area could see drilling activity resume in the coming year. Industry analysts expect drilling activity to [rebound in 2016](#) with [honed efficiencies](#). Also, filing these leases with the County is significant as oil companies typically file surface leases as a prelude to applying for actual drilling permits with the State.

ARE ORDINANCES ENFORCEABLE?

Mayor Bryan Barnett has stated many times in the last 3 years that "[ordinances are not enforceable](#)". Additionally, residents have concerns that loopholes in the current oil & gas well ordinances are open to broad interpretation of oil rig site zoning and that their worries have fallen on deaf ears.

Goals remain for DDH and Rochester Hills residents:

1. For the City to rescind the parks/cemetery lease
2. For the City to settle the [DDH lawsuit](#) and allow residents to vote on all leases, sales or conversions of parks to non-conservation or non-recreational use according to City Charter.
3. For the City to engage an attorney specializing in oil & gas ordinances to make promised protections enforceable and effective in practice.
4. For the City to follow the letter and intent of the City Charter

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Don't Drill the Hills, Inc. is a non-partisan grassroots nonprofit corporation that is building awareness of the risks of horizontal drilling in high-density residential and K-12 School areas. Concerns include: property rights, property values, mortgage and insurance complications, as well as potential environmental and health risks.