

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
COMMUNITY ROOM
31555 11 MILE ROAD, FARMINGTON HILLS MI
October 23, 2014**

Chair Topper called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. on October 23, 2014.

Commissioners Present: Blizman, Mantey, McRae, Orr, Rae-O'Donnell, Stimson, Topper, Schwartz

Commissioners Absent: Fleischhacker

Others Present: Staff Planner Stec, Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer, City Attorney Schultz, Planning Consultants Arroyo and Stirling, Grand River Corridor Authority Chair Brown

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Orr, support by Blizman, to approve the agenda as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR MEETING

A. DISCUSSION OF GRAND RIVER NORTH FOCUS AREA

Planning Consultant Arroyo led the discussion of this agenda item. Utilizing graphics on the overhead projector, Mr. Arroyo located the Grand River North Focus Area geographically, with Grand River/M-5 on the South, Nine Mile Road on the North, Tuck Road on the West and the rear of homes on Purdue Street on the east. The area was predominately zoned B-3 with the northwest corner zoned RC-3.

Planning Consultant Arroyo referred to the schematic *Figure 5.4 - Grand River North Focus Area Redevelopment Concept* as he described the conceptual plans for this area. Those conceptual plans included retaining the existing Target building, with this anchor store braced by smaller scale storefronts offering a mixture of uses. Additional storefronts would be added across the street, creating a pedestrian scale area appropriate for retail, entertainment, and dining. The street would terminate at the Steppingstone School, which would act to define the edge of the pedestrian area. With limited visibility from Grand River Avenue, the rear of the property was better suited for residential use, and residential units were planned for the back half of the property and were organized around two elongated greenspaces. Proximity to the school, the existing Target, and the new commercial and entertainment uses became an attractive amenity for residents, further creating value and ensuring success. The development would be connected to the rest of the Corridor through a public transit stop located adjacent to the entrance. The transit stop would face the interchange, which would be enhanced with plantings and landscaping, reinforcing the gateway into the Corridor.

Planning Consultant Arroyo reviewed the current situation in this area, noting that the Focus Area was surrounded by single family residential to the east and west, and multiple family to the north. The Edison power lines were prominent along M-5. The majority of the storefronts were filled with well-

known brand name stores, and there was a theater and a free standing Office Max. A masonry wall was along the east boundary of the parking lot, along with mature trees. There was a pedestrian walkway through the masonry wall that led to the Sunoco gas station to the east of the Focus Area along Nine Mile Road; there was no direct walkway to the subject site. Nine Mile Road was residential in character.

Planning Consultant Arroyo explained that there were some ownership issues, as the shopping center property was currently in bankruptcy.

Regarding the Steppingstone School, Staff Planner Stec said the School had communicated that they were happy at their location and were planning to stay there for the foreseeable future. There was no access from the school to the shopping center, though this could easily be constructed.

In response to questions from the Commission, Planning Consultant Arroyo said that the shopping center had two main issues:

- The perpendicular orientation from the main road, making the stores difficult to see
- Difficult access from the main road

Commissioner Schwartz commented that this property provided an excellent opportunity for a single investor. During discussions regarding the Vision Plan, this area had not been thoroughly discussed and needed more time now.

Commissioner Orr initiated a discussion regarding the layout of the Steppingstone School property, including parking. He believed the Focus Area could support more retail, and shared parking with Steppingstone School could encourage this. The entire Focus Area lent itself to shared parking.

Commissioner McRae thought that any plans regarding this area needed to have the buy-in of business owners, including the anchoring store, Target.

Further discussion centered on effective signage for the existing center, solutions to access difficulties, types of possible mixed-use development, and encouragement of a PUD (Planned Unit Development). Assistant to the City Manager Geinzer commented that there was going to be funding for redevelopment along Grand River. This Focus Area – a large single owner parcel – provided a unique opportunity for visionary development, including new housing.

Planning Consultant Arroyo pointed out that MDOT was preparing to do a “scoping study” of that portion of Grand River Avenue/M-5 that bordered this Focus Area. Clearzoning was working to also study the area and support the City’s position with MDOT.

Planning Consultant Arroyo summarized that coming up with zoning priorities was perhaps a little premature at this point – some planning decisions had yet to be made.

Commissioner Schwartz suggested that staff further research this Focus Area, taking into consideration its overall ownership along with the desires of its business owners, to explore whether those people/entities had viable ideas that could help inform City plans and/or the City could help move forward.

Commissioner Rae-O’Donnell thought it would be good to involve the City’s Economic Development Director.

Staff was requested to further research the possibilities for the Area, both from a planning and zoning perspective, as discussed above, and bring additional information to the Commission at a future study session.

B. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO ZONING ORDINANCE

Referring to his October 17, 2014 memorandum to the Planning Commission regarding *Ordinance Amendment Discussion*, Planning Consultant Arroyo introduced this discussion item. The memorandum included a table that listed 7 “housekeeping” changes to the Ordinance, and 10 changes that were more substantive in nature.

The 7 housekeeping items referred to sections regarding Subdivision Open Space and Open Space Clusters (Section 3-7), Tree Surveys (Section 5-31.3.B.vii.), Accessory Uses (Section 34-3.1.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9), and corrections of typos and formatting (Sections 34-3.1.28, 34-5.5.2A, 34-4.20). These were minor changes, not policy-oriented, and created greater consistency and accuracy within the Ordinance.

Discussion regarding the 10 more substantive changes included:

- 34-5.2.14 Research the required demand for stacking spaces for fast food restaurants, and revise the Ordinance accordingly.
- 34-5.2.6,7 & 12 Reorganize and clarify the Ordinance regarding shared/banked/reciprocal parking, and determine best process for the same.
- 34-5.14 Review with staff a provision that would require a landscape plan be submitted at the time of site plan but allow for an administrative waiver of that requirement based on specific criteria.
- 34-5.14 Review and research options for reorganizing and making consistent this section on landscape standards, including planting island dimensions and clear planting areas.
- 34-5.16 Review lighting requirements. The suggestion was to bring lighting into Code conformity in areas where lighting was being changed, but not necessarily require an entire large development or parcel – where there were areas unaffected by the lighting change – to be brought into conformity.
- 34-5.14 Review and recommend language regarding tree planting in parking areas.
- 34-3.5.2.5 Review for consistency the requirement in LI-1 Districts for a 20-foot parking lot setback; keep in mind LI-1 districts that abut residential areas.
- General Risk and benefits regarding more inclusive terminology for places of worship.
- Enforcement Clean up language regarding enforcement and civil infractions.
- Zoning Map Identify consent judgments – and perhaps PUDs – on the zoning map.

Regarding places of worship, Commissioner McRae wondered if the 50-foot setback requirement for signs was appropriate in all instances. Commissioner Blizman thought LED-type signs (sometimes desired by places of worship) inappropriate for residential districts.

Discussion was had regarding tree removal permits and the tree protection ordinance. This language could be reviewed to make sure the Ordinance was addressing the current needs of the City.

Regarding tree planting islands, it was felt that that the islands should be larger so that the trees could thrive.

Regarding requests to provide excess parking over Ordinance requirements, Staff Planner Stec suggested including language limiting excess parking to 25% over the Ordinance standard.

Regarding lighting, Commissioner McRae said that very few cities checked light installations after the installations were complete. Lighting plan approvals were very specific and binding, but what actually was installed could be something else entirely.

In response to a question from Commissioner Blizman, Commissioner McRae said that most lighting companies provided photometric plans free of cost.

Planning Consultant Arroyo said the next step was for Staff to incorporate comments received tonight and present draft ordinances at the next study session.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:

Commissioner McRae asked that Staff be proactive in smoothing out the application process, so that applicants didn't appear before the Commission when weren't ready to be approved.

Commissioners McRae addressed the traffic control at 10 Mile and Farmington Roads. He felt vehicles that were forced to stop on an incline on Farmington Road would have a very difficult time climbing the hill in the winter. This would be especially difficult during rush hour when vehicles stacked as they waited to get through the intersection.

Commissioner Orr suggested moving signage back to give drivers greater warning of the construction at the 12 Mile and Drake intersection.

Meeting schedule: The November 13 meeting was dropped from the schedule. The next meeting would be November 20, 2014.

ADJOURNMENT:

Hearing no further comment, Chair Topper adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Schwartz
Planning Commission Secretary

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