

**CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD  
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN  
JUNE 19, 2025, 7:30 P.M.**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The Planning Commission Regular Meeting was called to order by Chair Trafelet at 7:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present:           Brickner, Countegan, Mantey, Stimson, Trafelet, Varga, Ware

Commissioners Absent:           Aspinall, Grant

Others Present:                   Staff Planner II Mulville-Friel, Planning Consultant Upfal (Giffels Webster), City Attorney Schultz

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**MOTION by Countegan, support by Mantey, to approve the agenda as published.**  
**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**A. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT 5, 2024**

**CHAPTER OF CODE:           34, Zoning Ordinance**  
**PROPOSED AMENDMENT: Add design standards**  
**ACTION REQUESTED:       Recommendation to City Council**  
**SECTION:                   new Section 34-5.20**

Planning Consultant Upfal introduced the proposed amendment to add design standards to the Zoning Ordinance, noting that this topic had been discussed and reviewed in two prior study sessions. The objective of the amendment is to establish a baseline for building quality and appearance, emphasizing durability, maintainability, and consistency with the City's aesthetic vision, while balancing flexibility for developers.

Key elements of the proposed standards include:

- **Applicability:** Applies to all new construction. For expansions, applies only when there is a 50% or greater increase in floor area or indoor seating capacity, and only to facades facing or oriented toward a public right-of-way. Single and two-family dwellings are exempt, and in LI-1 zoning districts, the standards apply only on major thoroughfares.
- **Building Materials:** Specifies permitted primary and accent materials. At least 60% of the facade must use primary materials. This threshold is considered flexible compared to requirements in other communities.
- **Waivers:** The Planning Commission may grant waivers to the building material requirements if the two defined findings in 4.g. are met.
- **Architectural Scaling:** Prohibits blank facades and requires variation and articulation on visible facades facing public rights-of-way.

- **Roof Standards:** Flat roofs must include parapets to conceal HVAC equipment; pitched roofs must meet slope requirements, with waivers available. Rooftop patios/terraces on buildings three stories or more are prohibited in the rear 35% of lot depth.
- **Fenestration:** Specifies minimum ground and upper floor fenestration for buildings facing major thoroughfares and other public rights-of-way, with exceptions for uses requiring privacy.
- **Entrances:** Removes the mandate for front-facing entrances, instead requiring defined entrance features.

Commission discussion:

Discussion included the following key points and questions:

- One intent of the proposed design standards is to discourage poor-quality, low-cost construction, ensuring a baseline level of architectural integrity and material durability.
- Commissioners were concerned as to whether developers or the Chamber of Commerce had been notified of tonight's public hearing. In any event, community stakeholders should be notified before this amendment is presented to City Council.
- The draft referenced the "Zoning Administrator" as someone who reviews building facades, but the City does not use this title. The designation will be updated to "City Planner."
- It was suggested that 4.c. be edited to read: "... labeled on the proposed building elevation plans."
- Site plan informational requirements might need to be updated to require elevation drawings.
- A request was made to add a provision allowing additions to existing buildings to use the same materials as the original structure. Planning Consultant Upfal explained that the current draft requires full facade compliance if expansion exceeds 50%. Discussion focused on whether requiring such full compliance discourages redevelopment. Concerns were raised about forcing developers to update entire facades when expanding a building slightly beyond 50%. It was suggested that such strict compliance requirements might prevent some redevelopment or discourage reasonable building expansions.
- Planning Consultant Upfal clarified that additions under 50% are exempt from the standards, but that additions exceeding 50% must bring the entire visible facade into compliance. Commissioners debated the merits of adding an exception that would allow existing materials to be reused on expansions for design continuity.
- City Attorney Schultz pointed out that the ordinance intentionally requires buildings undergoing expansions over 50% to bring the visible facade into compliance with new standards. This was designed to improve outdated or lower-quality construction. For expansions under 50%, only the new or modified elements must comply. Additionally, the ordinance includes a general waiver provision that allows flexibility when existing materials may still be appropriate.
- Questions were raised about whether the requirement for parapets to screen rooftop mechanical units is redundant, as existing ordinances already require such screening. Planning Consultant Upfal suggested eliminating that requirement, but retaining the requirement that limited parapet height to one third of the height of the supporting wall (6.a.i.).
- A broader concern was raised about the assumption that using preferred materials would prevent blight. Even buildings made with approved materials can become eyesores if poorly maintained, while other materials might still result in attractive, well-kept buildings.
- Commissioner Countegan was concerned about placing financial strain on small businesses seeking to invest in modest improvements. He argued that cost-effective, code-compliant materials should remain an option, and that inflexible requirements might deter reinvestment.

- City Attorney Schultz reiterated that the waiver provision exists specifically to address concerns about high costs for required materials during redevelopment or renovation.
- There appeared to be consensus that the Commission should retain case-by-case discretion through the waiver process rather than creating an automatic exemption. It was up to developers to provide financial or practical reasoning in support of waiver requests.
- A final concern was that routine maintenance projects could inadvertently trigger the ordinance's requirements if more than 50% of the facade was affected. It was pointed out that any project that involved more than 50% of a façade would constitute a significant investment and would likely not be considered basic maintenance.
- Commissioner Brickner suggested revising 8.e. to include "exterior artwork" as an encouraged entryway feature.

Chair Trafelet opened the public hearing. As no public was present, Chair Trafelet closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Commission for further discussion and/or a motion.

**MOTION by Mantey, support by Stimson, to recommend approval of Zoning Text Amendment No. 5-2024 to City Council, with the following revisions:**

- **Section 4.c.: "All building materials and colors shall be clearly labeled on the proposed building elevation plans."**
- **Section 4.d: Replace "Zoning Administrator" with "City Planner."**
- **Section 6.a.i.: Eliminate first sentence.**
- **Section 8.e.: Add "exterior artwork" after "benches" in the list of entryway feature examples.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

#### **REGULAR MEETING**

No items.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

May 15, 2025, Regular and Special Meetings

**MOTION by Brickner, support by Ware, to approve the May 15, 2025 Regular and Special Meeting minutes as submitted.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

#### **COMMISSIONER/STAFF COMMENTS**

Commissioner Brickner spoke regarding the ongoing construction on Orchard Lake Road between 12 and 13 Mile Roads.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION by Ware, support by Brickner, to adjourn the meeting.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting ended at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristen Aspinall,  
Planning Commission Secretary