

MEETING MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 16, 2025 – 8:00 AM
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS - COMMUNITY ROOM
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD, FARMINGTON HILLS, MI

CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN SCOTT ELLIOTT AT 8:00 A.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: EUNICE JEFFRIES, T.R. CARR, SCOTT ELLIOTT, VIVIANNE ROUSSEAU, MICHAEL BRIDGES, FRITZ BEIERMEISTER, CASSIE CLARK

ALSO PRESENT: Cristia Brockway, Economic Development Director, John Trafelet, Planning Commission Chairman

EXCUSED: MARK ZACHOS, GERRARD ALLEN

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by T.R. Carr, supported by Fritz Beiermeister to approve the agenda as submitted.
Unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Fritz Beiermeister, supported by Vivianne Rousseau to approve the minutes of January 15th as submitted.
Unanimously carried.

BUSINESS

Scott Elliot turned the discussion over to Cristia Brockway. She shared that there are two market studies: the largest being the Twelve Mile and Orchard Lake Road study and the Grand River Corridor Market Study. The reason for these studies is to understand the current assets that exist within the corridor; how we can capitalize on them, and answer questions on what type of conditions exist, and how we can change these corridors into new developments and investment opportunities for industries such as restaurants, housing, and new offices.

The Twelve Mile and Orchard Lake corridors study is halfway completed. Information that has been collected includes community, visitor, business owner, and property owner input within these locations. The City has been hearing, like the Master Plan, many people are looking for restaurants, places to enjoy themselves, and have an experience. The two graphs that were provided indicated the different percentages of industry types within the two corridors: office ranking the highest. As a part of these discoveries, in conjunction with the cities pending text amendment for the OS-4 district, more R&D and medical industries may find uses within the Twelve Mile office buildings. There is also interest in office to residential conversion, commercial out lots, and other creative uses. The goal is to understand what the area will look like in a few years based on new market demand.

Members of the EDC inquired about property owners looking to do office to residential projects. Cristia Brockway shared that there are several offices looking into that project type. Members of the EDC asked if property owners are looking into incentive options, to which Brockway replied that all property owners are looking into incentives. Popular incentive options for office to residential include the MSHDA and the Brownfield Housing TIF. Much of these incentive programs focus on work force housing opportunities for those at a 120 percent or below AMI. Other incentives that projects could apply for would be through the MEDC, if applicable.

The City currently has a Text Amendment for the OS-4 district along Twelve Mile Road moving forward to Planning Commission on April 17th. Much of the proposed text amendment will allow retail and residential uses and is in line with what our Master Plan recently called out for. It will enable new out lots in front of the office buildings that could provide retail, residential, restaurant and nightlife. We anticipate a wealth of future opportunities along Twelve Mile Road.

Eunice Jeffries and other board members asked if the study indicated the number of employees working remotely and what days that might be. Brockway stated that many of those working remote, choice to do so in the middle of the week; Monday and Fridays tend to be the busiest in office days. T.R. Carr said these types of conversions are a great sign that more residents will be attracted to the City.

Many of the office buildings that were built in the 70s, 80s, and even the early 90s had a large floor plate and are incapable of creating an office to residential setting. To convert office space to apartments, a building must have operable windows, and a corridor space where residents can get to their dwellings. Moving forward, as the City is expanding on the opportunities of the Twelve Mile Road in particular, those large floor plate buildings may become more valuable for R&D type use. These buildings have more components, mechanisms, testing, and the white box space for large open areas that might become more popular. That's why the City is taking a dive into understanding Hillstech Dr. and how that relates to the Twelve Mile OS-4 district.

The City is working with a consultant called Community Attributes. They were established in Seattle, Washington. This group has an outside perspective that can understand there are different pathways to success in our area. One of the greatest things when interviewing the consultants is that they are able to focus on large and small business, are culturally aware, and understand every working piece as a part of this study. For economic success, large corporations, chain restaurants, small businesses, and first generations businesses all need to be considered together for a successful market study. Orchard Lake has a very diverse culture as well as Twelve Mile, including Indian, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese influences. With a multicultural business community, the market study pays special attention to what the unique growth requirements may be.

Brockway explained in the City's history, an overlay district proposing a mixed-use type was brought forth and failed. This may have been due to a lack of community education and lack of understanding with the market. This market study is focusing on a great deal of existing conditions, market demand, and industries patterns that may affect the City's growth. Community participation and education is a critical component within this study, for a successful transition into the future.

In addition to market trends, the City has discovered and is researching aesthetic improvements throughout Orchard Lake Road. T.R. Carr inquired about how the new Labor and Employment update through the State of Michigan might impact businesses within the City and how to address future challenges. Brockway replied that the new law adds to the previous struggles business owners had such as acquiring and retaining employees. Some solutions that mitigate this issue would be the attraction of young talent and an increased population. There are several projects in discussion and within the pipeline that may provide new workplaces and residential opportunities. These would play a part in that solution.

Cristia Brockway began discussing how the Grand River corridor market study is near completion and provided some of its findings. She explained that the corridor area could support a 175,000 square foot of new soft good retail. This would also include industries in need such as grocery, restaurants, retail, and residential town homes. 40,000 square feet of grocery is in demand within the Grand River corridor, and \$35 million of grocery spending is leaking out of the corridor boundaries alone. With Corewell Health as the corridor's major anchor, the demand for residential and restaurants has become even more substantial based on the study findings.

Within 5 miles of this space there is over 200,000 households just within 5 miles. The trade area is from Telegraph to I- 275 and from Five Mile to Ten Mile Road. That is \$1.2 billion worth due to the amount of community, visitor, and business spending within this dense area. The greatest spending within Farmington Hills is within the Grand River corridor area with \$46 million in each quadrant.

Once the Grand River corridor market study is done, the next steps are to beautify the area. Self-investment opportunities such as landscape improvements, wayfinding signage, art, and hanging baskets, will encourage property investments and make the area more attractive for users. Cristia has a meeting with MDOT on April 28 to discuss the City's vision.

Eunice Jefferies asked if public safety is part of the Grand River corridor market study. Cristia stated it has not been a focus of the study, but on the Grand River Corridor Improvement Board the City welcomed a member that is very familiar with public safety and has provided a great deal of insight into how we can make the corridor safer, how we can make the corridor more secure, and provide a good comfort level.

T.R. Carr thanked Cristia for a very, very well-done presentation and summarization of the market studies. Michael Bridges also agreed that Cristia's presentation was very informative.

Board members asked if Sheetz's has approached the City about the Grand River/Middlebelt site. Cristia responded that she has not heard of much news and no formal submittals have been made to the City.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Scott Elliott stated that Cristia and he were going to meet with the City Attorney to see if the Economic Development Corporation can support projects within the community.

REPORTS

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Vivianne Rousseau commented she was glad to hear all the good news and all the new plans and actions. Cristia asked Vivianne and other members to spread the word of these initiatives. Cristia is presenting the market study on Tuesday, May 20th at 7:00 p.m. at the Farmington Hills Library in front of COHA.

Fritz suggested at some point in time that the City needs to establish a five-year timeline as to where we want to be with this project.

Cristia informed the board that she is looking for three participants for the Focus group, and not five because that would be a quorum for the Twelve Mile/Orchard Lake study. These studies will be done virtually to accommodate your flexibility. The dates will be May 5th, May 6th, and May 8th virtually for whoever is wanting to participate in these meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Unanimously approved.

Minutes Drafted by Cristia Brockway, Economic Development Director