

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
MASTER PLAN STUDY
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN
AUGUST 15, 2024, 5:30 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Special Meeting was called to order by Chair Trafelet at 5:40pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Aspinall, Brickner, Grant, Mantey, Trafelet, Varga, Ware (arrived 6:22pm)

Commissioners Absent: Countegan, Stimson

Others Present: City Planner Perdonik, Staff Planner Canty, City Attorney Schultz, Planning Consultant Upfal

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION by Brickner, support by Aspinall, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

MASTER PLAN STUDY IMPLEMENTATION STUDY SESSION

A. Discuss Draft Zoning Text Amendment 2, 2024, to Revise Various Provisions of Sections 34-3.1.25, 34-3.1.29, 34-4.28, 34-4.31, 34-4.35, 34-4.36, and 34-4.40

Referencing his August 9, 2024 memorandum *Draft Zoning Text Amendment (“ZTA”) 2, 2024*, City Planner Perdonik led a discussion that focused on the changes that would comprehensively amend the use standards associated with drive-through or drive-in restaurants (Section 34-4.35); gasoline service stations (34-4.28); automobile repair (34-4.31); vehicle wash (34-4.40); and outdoor space for sale or rental of new or used motor vehicles, trailers, mobile homes, boats, recreational vehicles and other similar products (34-4.36) to add several new use standards and remove several existing ones.

The text amendment would also amend Sections 34-3.1.29.B and 34-3.1.29.C, to make vehicle washes a principal permitted use in the LI-1 Light Industrial district, instead of a special approval use.

B-3 District

The B-3 District, although covering only 2.30% of the city’s land, plays a significant role in commercial activities, allowing for various uses like car washes, gas stations, and car dealerships. B-3 is the most permissive commercial district and the City receives more requests to rezone to B-3 than other commercial zoning districts.

Gas stations and car washes

- The Planning Commission had requested more context for the number and distribution of gas stations and car washes within the City, specifically focusing on the B-3 Zoning District, to

determine how much of the City would be affected by the proposed amendment. Several maps were provided, including a map showing the location of gas stations in Farmington Hills and also the City of Farmington.

- The proposed amendment would continue to allow gas stations and car washes by right in LI-1 Light Industrial districts, which include traditional office and industrial parks, and frontage along Eight Mile and Grand River.
- The amendment would also continue to permit gas stations and car washes in ES-Expressway Service districts. About 0.16% of the City is zoned ES, concentrated mainly around the freeway interchange districts.
- There are approximately 41 gas stations in Farmington and Farmington Hills, with approximately 30 in Farmington Hills. Eleven (27%) of the gas stations in Farmington and Farmington Hills are open 24 hours. Approximately four additional gas stations are currently being considered in Farmington Hills, including Sheetz which is coming in as a PUD.
- Gas stations that meet all criteria and that are not a part of a PUD project are not a discretionary decision in B-3.
- The City has a higher number of gas stations and car washes in comparison to other communities.
- The amendment would define gas stations and car washes as special use within the B-3 District and limit them to redevelopment of existing sites, giving the City more control.

The consensus of the Planning Commission was to move forward with implementing special land use regulations as described regarding gas stations and car washes in the B-3 District, with a focus on setting design standards that are not overly restrictive but ensure a baseline quality.

Car dealerships

- Current car dealership rules are very permissive and there has been a proliferation of used car dealerships in the City.
- Most used car dealerships are along Grand River. Car dealerships could be slowed from proliferating outside of the Grand River area by requiring 200 feet of frontage on a state highway.
- Car dealerships should be excluded from Northwestern Highway because the City was focusing on establishing a walkable mixed-use district there.
- Requiring 200 feet of frontage would not preclude a larger car dealership. Indoor showrooms were permitted by right in the B-3 district, which included higher-end car dealerships.
- There are socioeconomic disparities in the Grand River area, and the City has a long-standing goal of revitalizing the corridor.

Drive-through restaurant front yard setbacks

Revisiting discussion from a prior meeting, the Commission discussed the current requirement for a 60-foot front yard setback for drive-through restaurants. This requirement creates tension with the goal of encouraging rear-yard stacking for drive-through lanes. By reducing the front yard setback to align with standard B-3 requirements, developers would find it easier to place buildings closer to the road and utilize the rear for stacking. However, care should be taken regarding placing drive-through restaurants near residential areas, and the special use designation would allow the City and the developer to negotiate appropriate protections for residential neighborhoods on a case-by-case basis without prohibiting the use altogether in these locations.

- There was consensus that making drive-through restaurants a special use would make it easier to attract desirable businesses, while still providing City control of the standards through the special use process. The Commission appeared to support reducing front yard setbacks for drive-thru restaurants to encourage rear yard stacking, when appropriate, through the special use approval process.

Automobile repair facilities

- The draft amendment would add standards to the ordinance pertaining to automobile repair facilities, especially impacting the B-3 district.
- An auto repair business would not be allowed to sell cars. The goal is to prevent the visual blight associated with repair shops that also sell used cars, which can lead to cluttered and unattractive sites and – when there are several such businesses in an area – cluttered and unattractive corridors.
- The B-2 district did not allow stand-alone auto repair business; the business had to be integral to a planned shopping center. This language was suggested for the B-3 district also. Stand-alone auto repair businesses would continue to be allowed in the LI-1 district. Light Industrial zoning was currently being used for auto repair businesses on frontages of Eight Mile and Grand River.
- Discussion ensued regarding the need to support small business owners who own stand-alone car repair businesses. Could enforced design and blight standards be an alternative to restricting the location of stand-alone auto-repair shops?
- It was noted that the amended language would apply to new businesses. Most of the existing auto repair businesses in the B-3 district would not be able to accommodate requiring all cars to be in the rear yard or screened because the lots are so small. Existing businesses would also be grandfathered.
- A “planned shopping center” was not currently defined.

Need for mixed-use zoning ordinance

There was agreement among Commissioners on the necessity of crafting a mixed-use zoning ordinance, especially since the Master Plan already anticipates mixed-use developments.

Conclusion

There is a sense of urgency to advance the zoning changes discussed tonight as well as looking at a mixed-use ordinance. Both are necessary for Farmington Hills to remain competitive. There was consensus to place Draft Zoning Text Amendment 2, 2024 on next month’s agenda, to set the Amendment for public hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Brickner, support by Grant, to adjourn.
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:22pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristen Aspinall
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem