

**CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN
JANUARY 16, 2025, 6:00 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Special Meeting was called to order by Chair Trafelet at 6:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Aspinall, Brickner, Countegan, Grant, Mantey, Varga, Stimson, Trafelet, Varga (arr. 6:11pm), Ware (arr. 6:13pm)

Commissioners Absent: None

Others Present: City Planner Perdonik, Staff Planner Canty, Planning Consultants Tangari and Upfal (Giffels Webster), City Attorney Schultz, Economic Development Director Brockway

Economic Development Director Brockway called the Commission's attention to the launch and purpose of the online Community Survey examining 12 Mile and Orchard Lake Corridors. The City is seeking feedback from community members, business and property owners, and visitors, regarding their experience in these business corridors. The survey, part of the market study aimed at boosting the City's economic growth, is available on the City's website. Director Brockway encouraged everyone to take the survey and also to encourage everyone within their circle of influence to participate. When complete, the survey and the market study will help inform the City relative to zoning changes on the corridors.

Chair Trafelet reported that he had been attending Economic Development Corporation meetings where Director Brockway reports on economic development in the City, and he passed around Director Brockway's latest report on her activities.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION by Grant, support by Stimson, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

SPECIAL MEETING

A. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT 4, 2024

CHAPTER OF CODE: 34, Zoning Ordinance

PROPOSED AMENDMENT: Amend Zoning Ordinance to revise definition of restaurant, drive-in; add definition of commercial outdoor recreation space; and delete reference to automobile service center and replace with automobile repair

ACTION REQUESTED: Set for public hearing

SECTIONS: 34-2.2 and 34-3.1.24

City Planner Perdonik and City Attorney Schultz provided an overview of the proposed text amendment, which will strengthen and clarify definitions related to recent zoning ordinance changes. The amendment ensures consistency in applying regulations and avoids disputes over terminology:

- **Definition of Commercial Outdoor Recreation Space:** Previously undefined, despite being listed as a permitted use in certain districts. The amendment aligns it with the existing definition for indoor recreation spaces.
- **Terminology Update – Drive-in vs. Drive-through Restaurant:** The ordinance has historically used the term “drive-in restaurant,” which is outdated. The amendment replaces it with “drive-through restaurant”.
- **Standardizing Automobile Repair Terminology:**
 - The phrase “automobile service center” was previously used but never defined.
 - The amendment eliminates this term and replaces it with the defined term “automobile repair”.
 - This change also removes the outdated reference to auto repair shops being permitted in B-3 districts, which is no longer applicable.

The amendment will be scheduled for a public hearing.

B. DISCUSS DRAFT ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT 3, 2024, TO REVISE VARIOUS OS-4 DISTRICT AND PARKING PROVISIONS

City Planner Perdonik explained that the proposed zoning text amendment is a high-priority initiative identified by both City Council and the Planning Commission. The amendment primarily affects the 12 Mile corridor, which is largely zoned OS-4, with some minor variations within PUDs. This allows the Commission to recommend changes to the OS-4 district that would primarily apply only to this corridor. The goal is to facilitate restaurant and entertainment growth, office-to-residential conversions, and increased density by modifying existing zoning regulations.

- The amendment allows for greater flexibility in land use, enabling new developments to better align with the city’s long-term planning goals.
- It seeks to optimize underutilized parking areas, increase height and density in certain areas, and support a mix of uses to encourage development.

City Planner Perdonik and Planning Consultants Tangari and Upfal led the following discussion.

DRAFT OS-4 Amendments

- The text amendment allowed greater building heights near I-696.
 - Properties south of 12 Mile are generally over 1,000 feet deep, with varying topography.
 - The amendment proposes allowing increased building height for developments near the freeway where the ground elevation is below 850 feet, as shown in the provided maps.
- New Definitions Introduced
 - **Artisan Manufacturing:** Small-scale businesses producing artisan goods or specialty foods for direct consumer sales (e.g., leather, glass, wood, textiles, ceramics).

The Planning Commission discussed adding stone and metal production, with clarification that blacksmithing and similar small-scale metalwork would be included, but heavy manufacturing would not.

- **Live-Work Units:** Mixed-use spaces allowing residents to live above their business, supporting artisan manufacturing, retail, personal services, childcare, and office use.
- Revised Intent of OS-4 Office Research District
 - The amendment expands the district’s purpose beyond office buildings, incorporating mixed-use developments with residential and commercial components.
 - The amended ordinance encourages walkability, public spaces, and public art to enhance the district’s appeal and support the tax base.
- Permitted Uses Expanded
 - The amendment allows attached single-family and multi-family residential uses, including office-to-residential conversions to adapt to market demand.
 - The amendment includes live-work units, along with select commercial uses from the B districts.
 - Hours of manufacturing operations and stand-alone parking structures were also included as considerations.
 - The terminology regarding office use such as “stenography office” and “clerical services” is outdated. A broader definition of "professional office" was proposed to encompass various modern business activities, such as podcast studios and creative workspaces.
 - Banks, credit unions, and savings & loans with drive-throughs would be permitted as a special land use. A financial institution located within a “professional office” space without a drive-through would be permitted as a matter of right.
- Reduced setbacks aim to bring buildings closer to the street, improving urban design and pedestrian accessibility:
 - 12 Mile setback reduced from 50 feet to 30 feet.
 - Thoroughfare setbacks reduced to 15 feet.
 - Local street setbacks set at 0 to 10 feet, encouraging street-facing storefronts.
- Building height adjustments included:
 - Base height increased from 50 to 65 feet.
 - Additional height allowances in key areas:
 - 80 feet permitted within 400 feet of I-696 and for properties where the ground elevation is below 850 feet.
 - 20’ height bonuses (up to a maximum of 100 feet) available if developers dedicate 15% of the lot to public space, such as a park or plaza.

Discussion:

Discussion focused on how these changes might impact residential neighborhoods. While developers and investors are actively seeking opportunities for increased height and density to make projects financially viable, there is a balance between increased density and maintaining a community-friendly atmosphere. While 100-foot buildings could attract large-scale investments, some commissioners questioned whether such heights were necessary to achieve successful mixed-use development. Current zoning allows for 100-foot buildings near I-275, and no developments have taken advantage of this. However, allowing for 100-foot buildings allows for future opportunity.

Regarding architectural standards and materials

The concern was raised that developers sometimes showed renderings with high quality materials, but when the development was finished, those high quality materials had given way to cheaper materials, particularly in multi-family projects. It was also important to maintain high architectural standards for

parking structures, which are often visually unappealing. Electric vehicle requirements should be incorporated into parking structure standards to accommodate future demand.

City Planner Perdonik said that a text amendment addressing architectural standards will be brought to the Planning Commission soon.

Other considerations

- While bus stops fall under SMART’s jurisdiction, the City should incorporate discussion of bus stop infrastructure into planning efforts.
- Commissioners discussed the role of public art in planning efforts.
- One bicycle space per 15 parking spots in large parking structures seemed excessive.

DRAFT Parking Standard Amendments

The proposed amendments to the parking ordinance addressed four key areas:

1. Reducing parking requirements for multifamily and office uses to better reflect actual demand and simplify enforcement:
 - The proposal removes tiered parking requirements for medical and professional offices in favor of a single standard of one space per 300 square feet.
 - Chiropractic offices would no longer be categorized separately from medical offices.
 - Multifamily parking requirements would shift from a bedroom-based calculation to a dwelling unit per acre standard, aligning with industry norms.
 - New standards differentiate between units with and without garages, setting requirements at two spaces per unit with a garage and 1.5 spaces per unit without an individual garage or driveway.
2. Establishing parking maximums to prevent excessive parking areas and encourage better site utilization.
 - The proposal caps parking at 120 percent of the minimum requirement, with any excess requiring Planning Commission approval based on documented demand.
 - Excess parking approvals would be handled through site plan review rather than a special approval process.
3. Providing flexibility in parking regulations to accommodate unique site conditions and administrative approvals where appropriate.
 - The amendment introduces flexibility for parking reductions based on site conditions and documented need.
 - Shared parking provisions and deferred parking, or land banked parking, remain available options but still require designated land to remain undeveloped for potential future parking. Deferred parking can limit development opportunities, as property owners must leave space available indefinitely.
 - A new “Deviations from Required Parking” section introduces demand-based, proximity-based, and shared parking adjustments.
 - **Demand-based parking adjustments** – Applicants can demonstrate lower parking needs through a study, referencing the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) parking manual, the ULI Shared Parking Guide, or independent research. Considerations include foot traffic, transit availability, and unique operational needs.
 - **Proximity-based reductions** – Applicants can demonstrate that their property is located in the GR-1 District (automatic reduction of 50%), near car-sharing or carpool spaces, bicycle

parking, or is close to a multi-use trail (is walkable). Commissioner Mantey suggested explicitly recognizing proximity to institutions like OCC and Michigan School of Psychology as a basis for parking reductions.

- **Cross-jurisdictional parking agreements** – Commissioners debated whether parking spaces outside Farmington Hills could be counted toward requirements. City Attorney Schultz indicated that voluntary agreements between property owners could provide a solution, though cross-jurisdictional requirements would need legal review.
4. Bicycle Parking Standards and Incentives
- Developments providing additional bicycle parking beyond the minimum requirement would be eligible for parking reductions.
 - A standard reduction allows one vehicle parking space for every four additional non-required bicycle spaces, with a greater reduction for covered bicycle parking.
 - Commissioner Mantey supported incorporating artistic bicycle racks into the standards and ensuring flexibility in design. Planning Consultant Upfal clarified that the ordinance allows for alternative bicycle rack designs as long as they meet the functional requirements of an inverted U-rack.

Discussion

There will be increasing need for covered parking in multifamily developments due to EV use. New multifamily projects could be required to install conduit for future EV charging, ensuring readiness without requiring immediate installation. The City already follows this practice at some municipal sites.

Next Steps

- City Planner Perdonik stated that the next step involves making revisions based on the study session discussion and bringing the text amendment back in ordinance form.
- Commissioner Countegan questioned how much revision should occur before sending the proposal to a public hearing. He suggested that rather than refining the language extensively among the Commission, it would be more efficient to receive public feedback earlier in the process.
- City Attorney Schultz explained that typically, the proposed changes would return for one more meeting before being formatted as an ordinance for a public hearing.
- Economic Development Director Brockway noted that responses from the market study survey could provide additional insights into how the public might react to the proposed changes.

Commissioners generally agreed that the main policy changes—introducing mixed-use development in the 12 Mile corridor, reducing parking requirements, and allowing greater building height—were clear. Commissioner Countegan stressed that specific details, such as a proposed 100-foot height limit, should be reviewed with public input as soon as possible.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

COMMISSIONER/STAFF COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Ware, support by Stimson, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passed by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57pm

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen Aspinall,
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem