

**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
MAY 18, 2023
6:00 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Countegan called the Special Meeting to order at 6:00pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Brickner, Countegan, Grant, Mantey, Trafelet, Varga

Commissioners absent: Aspinall, Stimpson, Ware

Others Present: City Planner Perdonik, Staff Planner Canty, City Attorney
Schultz, Planning Consultants Bahm and Tangari

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

NEW MASTER PLAN STUDY

- A. Review 2009 Master Plan Area Plans
 - i. Eight Mile Corridor
 - ii. Twelve Mile Corridor
 - iii. Orchard Lake Corridor

Planning Consultants Bohm and Tangari led tonight’s directed discussion, which began with breakout groups discussing 9 Residential Planning Areas. The 2009 Master Plan identified 15 special residential planning areas, five of which were determined to be areas that will not carry forward into the new plan due to changes in the last 14 years, and two areas were consolidated into one.

The breakout session participants were tasked with recommending 1) whether each residential area should be carried forward in the current Master Plan update, and if so 2) how should each residential area be characterized in terms of vision and goals.

After reconvening, the Commission discussed each residential planning area. Where specific recommendations were made, these are listed below – not all areas received a recommendation.

1. 13 Mile Rd near Middlebelt

Recommendation: Postpone recommendation relative to the master planning process as it appears likely a proposal will be coming to the Planning Commission for this site in June or July.

2. 10 Mile east of Middlebelt

As this residential area is not on a corner and is surrounded by single family residential development, mixed use with more dense development might not be a good fit. There are walkable elements in the area, however, including a sidewalk along the main road, and restaurants and churches, as well as a gas station, within walking distance.

Recommendation: 2009 goals are still relevant. Cluster option should be encouraged. Property will need to be assembled to encourage cohesive redevelopment.

3. Boys and Girls Republic and Inkster/9 Mile

Higher density development including senior facilities was approved in 2021 but did not go forward due to the expense of constructing a bridge to the northern part of the property; this was going to be an issue no matter who developed the site, and any development would need to be high density in order to be economically viable. However, the character of this area did not easily support high density development.

Recommendation: City develop the property as a conforming recreation use as noted in the 2009 Master Plan, targeted to the southeast population of the City. Seek funding such as a Michigan Parks and Recreation grant. Implementation: include in the Capital Improvement Plan.

4. Metroview Street

5. Historic Halsted Rd

6. 12 Mile & Schroeder

Residential planning areas 4, 5, and 6 had not changed since 2009.

Recommendation: Generally, 2009 goals are still relevant.

7. East side of Orchard Lake, south of 11 Mile

8. Inkster and 10 Mile

9. Orchard Lake north of 11 Mile

Recommendation: Consider development other than single-family residential use on the Orchard Lake street frontage.

The Commission discussed encouraging lower to moderate density (including duplexes) multi-family rental housing in area #9 generally, perhaps directly on the OCC campus, to serve people who are attending, employed by, or visiting the College. Increased commercial use along the street frontage might also be appropriate.

12 Mile Road Corridor

Planning Consultant Tangari moved the discussion to the 12 Mile Road Corridor, focusing on the areas between Orchard Lake Road and Halsted. The Commission appeared to have consensus that this area needed to be aggressively targeted in terms of allowing more uses and reducing the amount of parking on the office sites. Right now the area was almost all office, with some multi-family housing, with vast portions of often empty parking spaces.

Discussion highlighted the following transformative vision for the area:

- Mixed use could include commercial development including small businesses, and multi-family development, with smaller buildings (perhaps outbuildings?) and much less parking. Restaurants should be encouraged. Spaces could be repurposed as start-up spaces.

- Many people from out of the country are employed on this corridor; they might find nearby housing in mixed use developments especially desirable.
- Useable pedestrian open space with public amenities was desired. The area already had a library, a theater, and restaurants. Pedestrian-friendly amenities such as public fountains/gardens would draw people in.
- There has been recent interest in repurposing at least one existing building to multi-family housing.
- “Convenience commercial” might be an appropriate zoning designation for this area.
- 12 Mile from Orchard Lake to Middlebelt does not need to be part of the special study area.

OCC East End

- Discussed above. Potential for residential development.

Eight Mile Corridor (east of Farmington)

- This is an industrial area with many non-conforming parcels. There are very few vacancies.
- Discussion generally agreed with the goals established in the 2009 master plan.
- The vision for the area could include adaptive re-use provisions that would allow for some conversion of older buildings to restaurants and other uses.
- Zoning ordinance standards might be discouraging redevelopment/cleaning up of the buildings/parcels, as it was almost impossible to bring these properties into conformance. Perhaps a change in zoning ordinance standards for this area could instead encourage creative clean-up, building and site improvement, and re-use.
- Appropriate screening/buffering between light industrial and residential to the north should be required.
- Should the mobile home park (Farmington Manor) use ever be changed, the northern portion should be planned for residential, with the southern portion staying light industrial, consistent with the line of uses already there.

Orchard Lake Corridor

- Last plan split Orchard Lake between 12 and 13.5 Mile into four sub-areas; new map considers this as a single corridor.
- The City had been contacted by a developer who had interest in redeveloping the building north of Firwood into mixed use multi-family housing.
- There were a variety of uses in the 13 Mile/Orchard Lake area. Diversity of use could be encouraged along the entire corridor, especially encouraging restaurant use (forming a “restaurant row”).

Summarizing thoughts:

Throughout the discussion, Planning Consultant Bahm encouraged the Commission to be intentional about what types of development should go where. A description of that intentionality could be part of the introductory narrative to the Master Plan. Mixed use, for instance, might not be appropriate in residential areas located away from corners or areas where businesses currently existed. The existing character of the neighborhood was important to consider.

Areas that could benefit by cluster developments perhaps did not need to be specifically called out in the Master Plan.

One accessibility issue was brought up in discussion – the City’s splash park was inaccessible via wheelchair. While this example fell under Parks and Rec, should the Master Plan acknowledge accessibility as a priority and incorporate accessibility in its vision and goals?

Another issue discussed was whether parking requirements for office buildings (and elsewhere) should be reduced, or even eliminated entirely.

Chair Countegan noted that tonight the Commission had discussed many areas in the City – both residential and commercial. He asked the Commission to think about what should be emphasized and what should be de-emphasized, and suggested that the Commission focus on four or five major points of interest going forward, as opposed to carrying forward all the discussions from the 2009 Master Plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

COUNCILPERSON/COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marisa Varga
Planning Commission Secretary
/cem