

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN
September 21, 2023, 5:30 P.M.
Special Meeting – Master Plan Study**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Special Meeting was called to order by Chair Countegan at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Countegan, Grant, Trafelet, Stimson, Varga, Ware

Commissioners Absent: Aspinall, Brickner, Mantey

Others Present: Planning and Community Development Director Kettler-Schmult, City Planner Perdonik, Staff Planner Canty, City Attorney Schultz, Planning Consultants Bahm and Tangari, Planning Staff LaBelle

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION by Stimson, support by Trafelet, to amend and approve the agenda as follows:

- **Move Public Comment to first on the agenda.**

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NEW MASTER PLAN STUDY

A. Nonmotorized Transportation Plan

B. Housing Plan

Planning Consultants Tangari and Bahm led tonight's discussion relative to the new Master Plan Update.

Planning Consultant Tangari reviewed where the update was in terms of process. The planners were working on drafting the plan, with the housing plan draft ready for review within a couple of weeks, along with the non-motorized transportation plan. Moving forward, the rest of the Master Plan document with an implementation plan will be drafted and provided to the Planning Commission for their review, after which it will be sent to City Council for distribution to neighboring communities. The final part of the process will take a few months because there is a specific comment period required by statute, before the updated master plan can be adopted.

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Planning Consultant Tangari reviewed elements of the housing plan, including:

- Housing stock analysis and market study data

The goal of housing is to provide a variety of home and lot sizes that complement existing single-family neighborhoods in the city. 12 Mile Road and Grand River Avenue can be transformed from serving primarily as transportation and commercial corridors to vibrant, mixed-use areas, by adding new housing options, including quality options for renters.

- The median housing age in the City is 44 years (built in 1979).
- 61% of homes were owner-occupied in 2021, with a 5% vacancy rate.
- There are 37,434 total housing units.
- There are fewer smaller houses (under 1400sf) being built; more than half of new homes are over 2400sf.
- More people are choosing to rent, with highest concentrations at youngest and oldest ends of the spectrum.
- Attainability has declined as prices have risen very quickly.
- 50% of all households note that they may or will move within the next few to five years. At least one-third of those will seek homes in or around Farmington Hills.

- Attainability and affordability

- Affordable housing is a term used specifically to refer to HUD-supported, cost-restricted housing.
- Attainable housing is a more general concept.
 - A household spends a maximum of 30% of its income on attainable housing.
 - Households above that threshold are considered cost-burdened.
 - An area's housing is attainable if those with incomes 80%-120% of the region's median household income can afford to buy it.
- In Michigan, 48.5% of renters and 22.2% of homeowners are cost-burdened.
- Farmington Hills median sold price in the last 12 months is \$349,580. Median gross rent in 2020 was \$1,211. Median household income in Farmington Hills is \$93,434 – relatively few households are cost-burdened (poverty rate 5.8%). Yet affordability and attainability are still important considerations.
- A wide range of price points accommodates an economically diverse population.
- Moving further away from the downtowns may help someone afford a bigger house on a larger lot, but the increase in transportation costs may wipe out any savings.

- Visitability and Universal Design

- Market study notes a potential demand for up to 2,000 senior units in the Farmington Hills market, although not all of these units will necessarily be within the City. Could mixed-use infill accommodate seniors?
- Aging in Place vs. Aging in Community; both types of homes require universal design.
- Visitability refers to housing that is designed to be welcoming to all visitors.

- Improve existing neighborhoods

- Missing Middle Housing – falls between detached single-family and big apartment buildings.
- Includes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-unit buildings, townhomes, rowhouses, small apartment buildings.
- Gently adds density and price-point variety.
- Facilitate infill housing.
- Assess community needs – for instance, would sidewalks be welcomed in neighborhoods that don't have any?
- Potential to financially support upgrades and maintenance in areas with lower income levels.

- Residential special planning areas
 - Generally, sites envisioned for flexible single-family development with the potential to utilize the cluster option.
 - Consider affordability – small or attached units, or cottage court development.
 - Other study areas can be used to support the missing middle and greater affordability.
- Mixed use planning areas
 - Orchard Lake Road/14/Northwestern
 - M-5 Corridor
 - East End of OCC
 - 12 Mile Road/I-696 Corridor

Director Kettler-Schmult said that the City had a grant application for Connecting Communities for the M-5 corridor, to use to explore options for an intersection in that area. While this would not be as big a change as the planners wanted, an intersection would change the dynamics of the area.

- Multi-family scale and density
 - Farmington Hills has 3 multi-family districts. Is a fourth multi-family district needed?
 - Form-based mixed use districts or overlays could support redevelopment in the study areas.
 - How high is the City willing to build? The current 3-story maximum does not allow for much flexibility.

Commission discussion and questions:

- Short term rentals such as AIRBNB, and large scale property owners that may live/be headquartered far away drive up both sale and rental prices for people who live in the community, causing the percentage of people who are cost-burdened to rise, and disrupting stable neighborhoods. Yet it is almost impossible to regulate who can purchase a home.
- The City was addressing short-term rentals with its new ordinance that defined short term rentals as motels, thereby limiting where such enterprises can be located.
- Homeowners Associations should be encouraged to work together, under COHA (Council of Homeowner Associations). HOA deed restrictions can be legally updated.
- The Master Plan can address all the above issues, including in its section on implementation, and in its section on advocacy.
- The City could sponsor or direct people to someone who can provide resources when people need extra help in dealing with their housing situation.
- The fact that relatively few Farmington Hills households are cost-burdened does not reflect the fact that young people who grow up in Farmington Hills cannot afford to return to the City to live. This is why a wide range of price points is desirable, in terms of accommodating an economically diverse population.
- Senior citizens also need options in the City. Under Michigan's tax structure, it becomes very expensive for an older person to leave a home they've lived in for many years, yet the senior(s) may need a more accommodating home as they age.
- Some residents need help with funding necessary upgrades and maintenance on their homes, in order to remain in them.
- Districts could be envisioned and planned to provide for a specific type of environment. During the Master Plan update, it has become apparent that there is a specific environment that the Commission would like to create, at least in some areas of the City.

Chair Countegan summarized that one overarching theme in tonight's discussion had been the ability to provide flexibility in development, and this desire should be referenced in the Master Plan.

Chair Countegan closed discussion.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Grant, support by Stimson, to adjourn the Special Meeting at 6:28pm.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marisa Varga
Planning Commission Secretary
/cem