

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
JULY 20, 2023
6:00 P.M.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Aspinall, Brickner, Countegan, Mantey, Stimson,
 Trafelet, Ware (arr. 6:35pm)

Commissioners absent: Grant, Varga

Others Present: Director Kettler-Schmult, City Planner Perdonik, Planning
 Consultants Bahm and Aamodt

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

NEW MASTER PLAN STUDY

A. Recap Special Planning Areas/Public Input

Planning Consultant Bahm overviewed comments received so far from the online platform for public input.

People appeared to be in support of flexible single-family development including the use of the cluster option, had an interest in affordability, and were concerned with open space protection and environmental protection. There was also concern about the deer population in the city, and one respondent asked that the City keep larger lots.

Planning Consultant Bahm encouraged everyone to share the link for the online platform with their circles of influence.

Referencing her July 13, 2023 memorandum which summarized Special Planning Areas discussion highlights, and utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Planning Consultant Bahm focused on non-residential areas:

1. Freeway Redevelopment Areas.
 - Images were provided from the RINO district in Denver and the North Lakeview Industrial district in Birmingham, AL.
 - Action items for future study included exploring strategies to encourage 8-story development in area 1, review anticipated uses in LI-1 to provide more flexibility and re-occupancy/redevelopment potential, explore parking standards with a goal of removing excessive parking and limiting new development parking areas, and consider creating concepts for desirable places that fit the industrial/IRO context.

2. Eight Mile Industrial (east of Farmington Road)
 - Carry forward from the last plan – focus on incremental improvement, with aesthetics in the lead.
 - Develop light design standards that can provide for incremental improvements over time.
3. Grand River Wellness Corridor
 - Carry forward concepts from previous plan.
 - Create framework for careful expansion behind the existing corridor, where lots are shallow, to support redevelopment.
 - Bring more residential potential into the corridor via modifications to the overlay
 - Example: Lathrup Village

It came out in discussion that this corridor is the only TIF (Tax Increment Financing) area in the City; to date the TIF has not resulted in significant redevelopment funds.

4. M-5 Corridor – seeking opportunity for meaningful redevelopment
 - Eliminate the grade-separated, limited-access freeway and replace it with a boulevard (or convert Freedom and Folsom to bigger roads with development between them)
 - Explore potential for transit
 - Enhance non-motorized routes
 - Support contextually appropriate multi-family/corner store-style development with public spaces
5. Grand River and Drake: create flexibility, potentially by pre-qualifying the full area for PUD development.
6. East end of OCC campus
Example: The MK in Indianapolis – small 4 story potential mixed-use development.
7. 12 Mile/I-696 corridor, approximately 613 acres total from Halsted to the HAWK.
 - Transition from an almost entirely office corridor to a more mixed corridor
 - Gradually introduce locally-focused convenience commercial uses, residential, and shared spaces, infill development, outlot development, mixed use, quasi-public space including markers/gathering spaces such as a fountain, small stage, etc.
 - Encourage gradual changes over time, as illustrated by concept drawings in the presentation.

The Commission discussed the likelihood of drive-thrus seeking space on 12 Mile Road; this was not the desired outcome and could be limited/prohibited in this area through careful planning and zoning.

8. Orchard Lake Road 12 Mile to 13.5 Mile
 - Continue transition, focusing on cross-access between businesses to improve travel on Orchard Lake Road.
 - Explore developing better design standards, landscaping
 - Provide more flexibility for moving buildings up closer to Orchard Lake Road
 - Consider residential under the right circumstances.
9. Orchard Lake/14 Mile/Northwestern Highway
 - Prime area for mixed use, particularly with new development in coming years

- Suitable for intensive development
- Sketch showed a potential vision for the area, with townhomes and some single-family homes on 50' wide lots in the rear, and mixed use along the frontage.
- Potentially expose the underground creek that is part of the Emerson project. (Example: Springfield MO)
- Potential residential development at the old Sam's Club location.
- Linear path to connect to County Park

Discussion: Sometimes large projects are approved but for one reason or another never built. Can the City be proactive in reaching out to other potential developers should a potential project fall through? Can the City educate potential developers relative to funding sources that might be available?

B. Discuss Complete Streets/Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Concepts/Public Input

- Respondents are marking up maps on the online input platform.
- Existing paths for walking and bicycling could be widened to 10' if possible, along with the creation of better connections and crossings.
- Paths should be ADA compliant
- This was the Planning Commission's opportunity to put a non-motorized plan in writing.
- Construct cross walks in areas such as the Grand River Wellness Corridor and other locations. Be creative about seeking funding.

C. General discussion

- Chair Countegan emphasized the importance of summarizing community outreach efforts and responses in the final Master Plan document, as well as outlining the Master Plan process.
- The City will have a booth at the Founders' Festival.
- City's 50th anniversary event was well attended and well received.
- Follow up to the business development roundtable will be held on Monday, July 24.
- Next Master Plan meeting will be August 17, 6:00pm for the Steering Committee only (Brickner, Stimson, Varga, Ware).

PUBLIC COMMENT

A resident asked about certain terms the Commission used during their discussion. Terminology could be confusing to the general public, and using old location names could also confuse (e.g., "Boys and Girls Republic" for what is now the "Lutheran Wellspring Services." The resident also hoped that 12 Mile Road would develop into something friendlier and more welcoming than Big Beaver Road in Troy, a location that had been mentioned during tonight's discussion. He opposed drive-thrus as redevelopment options.

Chair Countegan encouraged the Commission to be careful in their choice of words. For instance, sometimes the approved development The Emerson was referred to as "high rise," but it was only 4 stories tall. Use positive accurate language when speaking of and to the Farmington Hills community.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Countegan closed the meeting at 7:28pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marisa Varga
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem