

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY COUNCIL
CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
FEBRUARY 24, 2025 – 6:00PM**

The study session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Rich at 6:00pm.

Council Members Present: Aldred, Boleware, Bruce, Dwyer, Knol and Rich

Council Members Absent: Bridges

Others Present: City Manager Mekjian, Assistant City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl, Directors Kettler-Schmult, Rushlow, and Schnackel, and City Attorney Joppich

DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC ART FUNDING OPTIONS

Referencing the February 24, 2025 memorandum *Public Art Funding Options*, City Manager Mekjian noted that public art was identified as a goal during the January 24, 2025 goal-setting session. Support for public art and its relationship to placemaking in the community was reinforced with the adoption of the Master Plan for Future Land Use that was adopted in August 2024. The topic was further discussed during two City Council study sessions held on July 8, 2024 and October 28, 2024. Council discussion included concerns about potential negative impacts of any public art requirement involving developers. However, after gathering input in October, the feedback suggested that similar initiatives in other communities have not deterred redevelopment. The latest version of the proposal has been developed with greater involvement from the Planning and Community Development Department and the City's planning consultants, with a focus on funding mechanisms.

Director Kettler-Schmult noted that at past meetings there was general consensus on incorporating public art as an optional feature in Planned Unit Development (PUD) projects, though the frequency of such developments in the future remains uncertain. She emphasized the need for a consistent approach to funding public art initiatives across both public and private developments to ensure a cohesive and sustainable program.

Referencing the Giffels Webster Public Art Funding Options memo dated February 13, 2025, Planning Consultant Bahm guided Council's discussion on potential funding sources for a public art program. The memo outlined five potential funding options, providing examples along with their respective advantages and disadvantages:

1. General Fund
2. Percent of Capital Improvement Projects
3. Percent of Private Development Projects
4. Grants
5. Crowdfunding and Community Fundraising

A table showing suggested funding source; percentage of contribution; threshold/range; and maximum contribution was included in the Giffels Webster report.

Discussion included:

- Successful programs typically adopt a blended approach, allowing for flexibility and adaptability as the program grows.
- A key point of discussion was the implementation of a “percent-for-art” ordinance, which would require developers of significant projects to allocate a portion of their budget to public art. The discussion acknowledged that such ordinances offer flexibility, with many communities setting lower percentages for smaller projects and increasing the requirement for larger developments. Pairing private sector contributions with public investment creates a fair and consistent approach, demonstrating the city's commitment to public art.
- Council also discussed how capital improvement projects could incorporate art funding. Ann Arbor’s model, which initially allocated one percent of the total capital improvement budget for public art before shifting to a project-by-project approach, was cited as an example. A threshold for projects eligible for art funding was suggested, with a cap of \$200,000 annually. While general fund dollars could support public art, enterprise funds, such as those used for water and sewer projects, would not be eligible.
- Council generally supported a phased approach, starting with modest funding commitments and refining the program over time. Whatever approach was used, it should ensure financial sustainability while remaining flexible.
- The use of tax capture from the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) was also discussed as a targeted funding source for public art in the Grand River corridor.
- As already mentioned, there was broad support for incorporating public art into Planned Unit Developments.
- As in prior meetings, some council members were hesitant about requiring private developers to contribute a set percentage toward public art. Concerns were raised about the potential impact on development and whether such a requirement could deter investment.
- An alternative suggestion was to allow developers to contribute to a public art fund rather than requiring installations on their properties, similar to the city’s approach to tree funds. This approach would provide flexibility in placing art in locations where it would have the most public visibility and impact.
- Council appeared to favor starting with small-scale initiatives, such as using crowdfunding and community fundraising to build excitement and gauge public interest in public art. Successful examples from other cities, including downtown Farmington’s pocket park project, were referenced as models for engaging the community. Locations such as the Hawk and Heritage Park were suggested as potential sites for initial public art projects funded through these grassroots efforts.
- The Arts Commission should play a central role in guiding public art efforts and providing expertise on placements and project selection.
- The need for a coordinated, well-planned approach to public art was emphasized, with members suggesting an Arts Master Plan to ensure consistency and strategic placement of installations.
- While Council remained cautious about mandating developer contributions, they acknowledged that policies could be adjusted based on feedback from the development community and changes in economic conditions. The discussion emphasized the need to establish a funding framework first, with implementation details and an overall master plan to follow.
- Council debated the appropriate level of funding, with some advocating for a cautious, incremental approach to avoid diverting funds from other community priorities, while others emphasized that the city is significantly behind – a decade behind – in public art compared to neighboring

communities. It was noted that relying solely on small contributions would not be sufficient to make a meaningful impact.

- The conversation also touched on how to formalize funding mechanisms. Options included establishing a public art fund as already mentioned, where collected fees would be allocated for projects, as well as incorporating public art requirements into ordinances or fee resolutions that could be adjusted over time. The Southfield model, which allows developers to either install artwork on their property or contribute to a fund, was referenced as a potential template. There was discussion about ensuring transparency in how funds are collected and used, with an emphasis on showcasing completed projects to build public awareness and support.
- Legal considerations were raised, particularly regarding the constitutional implications of requiring private developers to allocate funds for public art. The City Attorney and Council discussed the need for careful drafting of any ordinance to avoid over-regulation.
- Council suggested a tiered approach, exempting small projects and non-profits while applying a percentage-based contribution for larger developments. A proposal was floated to set the contribution at half of one percent for developments between \$1 million and \$10 million, with a cap of \$50,000. However, some members were hesitant about setting firm amounts before fully establishing a public art fund and gaining more experience with implementation.
- Overall, the discussion reflected seeking a balance between ensuring a steady funding stream for public art while avoiding undue burdens on developers. Council agreed that flexibility should be built into the program, allowing developers to choose between on-site installations and contributions to a public art fund. Further discussion would be needed to refine contribution levels, legal frameworks, and how to effectively launch and promote public art initiatives in the city.

The following next steps were suggested:

1. **Public Art in PUDs:** Suggest language that will require public art in Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), either through on-site installations or contributions to a public art fund. Alternatively, draft language could include public art as one of several acceptable public benefits, allowing for negotiation on a case by case basis.
2. **Corporate Feedback:** Mayor Pro Tem Dwyer suggested visiting with the top ten corporations in the City to assess support for private sector contributions to public art. He offered to visit these businesses in person, along with the Assistant City Manager and perhaps one other person.

Other items that remain topics of interest include:

1. **Public Art Fund:** Establish a public art fund to pool contributions from developers and other sources.
2. **Flexible Requirements for Private Development,** including a tiered approach that exempts smaller projects and non-profits while setting percentage-based contributions for larger developments.
3. **Integration with Architectural Enhancements:** Developers may be allowed to fulfill public art requirements through high-quality design and aesthetic improvements.
4. **Incremental Funding Approach:** Start with modest funding commitments and refine the program over time to ensure sustainability.
5. **Community Engagement:** Crowdfunding and community fundraising may be considered for initial projects to gauge public interest.
6. **Arts Commission Role:** The city's Arts Commission can provide expertise in selecting and placing public art.

7. **Legal Review:** The city attorney will provide guidance on structuring an ordinance and/or policies to ensure compliance with property rights laws.
8. **Further Study and Refinement:** The council will revisit private development contributions after additional research and stakeholder feedback

PRESENTATION FROM MAKE FOOD NOT WASTE

Director Rushlow introduced the discussion, explaining that the city has been working with Make Food Not Waste since September 2023 to explore strategies for reducing food waste. The initiative aligns with upcoming changes in materials management plans at the county level and the state's goal of cutting food waste in half by 2030. Director Rushlow emphasized the importance of establishing a blueprint to guide local efforts and turned the presentation over to Make Food Not Waste Executive Director Danielle Todd, who provided background on the issue.

Mike Csapo from RRRASOC (Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County) and Stephanie Osborn from Giffels Webster were also present.

Ms. Todd explained that Make Food Not Waste is a Detroit-based nonprofit focused exclusively on food waste reduction. The organization operates kitchens that transform food that would otherwise be discarded into meals and recently launched the "Every Bit Counts" program to address food waste more broadly. Approximately 40 percent of all food produced is wasted, making up about 25 to 30 percent of landfill content, where it releases methane, a harmful greenhouse gas. Reducing food waste is one of the most effective and cost-efficient strategies for combating climate change, as well as a way to conserve resources and reduce food insecurity.

At both the state and federal levels, policies support reducing food waste, but Michigan's Healthy Climate Plan currently lacks specific strategies for achieving its goal of a 50 percent reduction by 2030. Given that most food waste in Michigan originates in southeast Michigan due to its high population density, Ms. Todd suggested that focusing efforts on the region's 15 most populated cities could provide the greatest impact. Those cities alone produce approximately 750 million pounds of food waste annually, making them a key area for targeted reduction efforts.

To explore the feasibility of large-scale food waste reduction, Make Food Not Waste proposed a pilot study focusing on a single city to assess costs, logistics, and necessary resources. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) funded a 2024 study in Southfield, which engaged 17 local and national partners to analyze best practices. The study prioritized food waste prevention and recovery, with composting as a secondary component. The goal is to use the findings from Southfield to develop a scalable model that can be expanded to other cities in the region, ultimately contributing to the state's broader food waste reduction efforts.

The implementation of food waste reduction efforts will primarily be handled by the partner organizations involved in the planning phase, with cities playing a supportive role. The Southfield blueprint has been completed, and efforts are now focused on securing funding for its implementation while simultaneously developing similar plans for Farmington Hills, Canton, Livonia, Westland, and Dearborn. The goal is to complete these plans by late summer, after which funding will be sought through state, corporate, and private sources. Future expansion will target additional cities, starting with Ann Arbor and moving toward communities on the east side of Detroit.

The planning framework follows recommendations from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), prioritizing strategies that provide the highest environmental and financial benefits, such as preventing food waste before it occurs.

Addressing concerns about ordinances that prohibit feeding animals, Ms. Todd clarified that any food directed toward animal consumption would be collected and sent to farms rather than be distributed by individuals.

The broader materials management planning process at the county level is incorporating food waste reduction efforts, and several smaller cities, including Novi, Royal Oak, and St. Clair Shores, have expressed interest in joining the initiative.

A key component of the project is public education to help residents and businesses reduce food waste, manage expiration dates more effectively, and make better use of purchased food. Council expressed interest in adding educational materials to the city's website to help residents develop these skills, which were once taught in home economics courses but are now less commonly known or practiced. The discussion also highlighted the financial benefits of reducing food waste, as minimizing discarded food saves money for both households and businesses.

From a waste management perspective, composting is an important but complex aspect of the initiative. The county's materials management planning process will need to ensure that there are sufficient facilities to handle food waste at scale, such as the Spurt composting facility in Wixom.

The need for patience and thoughtful local planning was emphasized, as well as resident input, to develop a system that aligns with best practices and emerging state regulations.

The discussion concluded with an emphasis on engaging schools and businesses in food recovery efforts, such as reinstating "sharing tables" in schools where uneaten food can be set aside for those in need.

Director Rushlow said that next steps include distributing surveys to Farmington Hills residents and businesses to gather feedback that will help shape the city's food waste reduction plan, which is expected to be drafted by June.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session meeting was adjourned at 7:24pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk