

**CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN
JULY 16, 2026 7:30 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Chair Lindquist at 7:31 pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Banks, Brickner, Countegan, Grant, Lindquist, Mantey, Stimson, Trafelet, Ware

Commissioners Absent: None

Others Present: City Planner Mulville-Friel, City Attorney Joppich, Planning Consultant Auerbach (Carlisle Wortman)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Grant, supported by Brickner, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

REGULAR MEETING

A. SITE PLAN 55-6-2026

LOCATION: 24435 Halsted Road
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-19-426-013
PROPOSAL: Outdoor motor vehicle sales, reconditioning, and service in LI-1, Light Industrial District.
ACTION REQUESTED: Site Plan Approval
APPLICANT: Hayder Alkhafaji
OWNER: HFR Capital, LLC

Planning Consultant Review

Referencing the July 10, 2026 Carlisle Wortman memorandum, Planning Consultant Auerbach reviewed the site plan approval request for the property at 24435 Halsted Road, located at the southwest corner of Halsted Road and Hallwood Court. The applicant proposed to use the existing building and parking lot for used motor vehicle sales, with accessory vehicle inspection and reconditioning bays, a paint booth, and indoor repair of cosmetic and minor structural damage. No exterior site changes are proposed.

Surrounding Uses and Existing Building

The property is zoned LI-1, Light Industrial, as are the properties to the north, south, and west. An indoor recreation business is located to the north, a multi-tenant commercial building is located to the south, and a light industrial business is connected to the west side of the subject building. The Independence Green apartment complex is located east of Halsted Road in the RC-3, Multifamily Residential District.

The existing one-story building contains approximately 13,800 square feet and a 340 square foot mezzanine office. The building was previously used as an office and has been vacant since 2018. The

proposed interior renovation includes an approximately 4,890 square foot showroom, sales and office rooms, and areas for repair, painting, and storage. The repair area is served by one existing overhead door at the front of the building, with no rear access. No changes are proposed to the mezzanine.

Site Circulation and Existing Nonconformities

Employee parking is proposed along the Hallwood Court frontage and on the west side of the site. Customer parking is proposed along the Halsted Road frontage, and spaces directly in front of the building are designated for vehicle display. The two existing full movement access drives on Hallwood Court will remain.

Existing nonconformities include:

- The Hallwood Court right of way extends into the first row of adjacent parking spaces, reportedly due to a prior municipal right of way expansion. Parking spaces along Halsted Road are also within the required front setback when measured from the planned right of way. These existing conditions may remain, but requirements triggered by the new use must be satisfied.
- The Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum 60-foot intersection offset for a driveway serving an automobile sales use. The existing driveway is approximately 50 feet from the intersection. The applicant must either correct the driveway location or obtain a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- The existing dumpster enclosure is located in the front yard and may remain as an existing nonconformity. The applicant must provide details confirming that the enclosure is opaque and adequately screened before final approval.
- Two spaces identified for vehicle display encroach into the required Halsted Road front setback. Because those spaces are barrier-free spaces intended for customer use, the issue can be corrected by revising the display space designations on the plan.

Parking, Loading, and Pedestrian Access

Based on the showroom floor area, 49 off-street parking spaces are required. The plan provides 39 spaces, including the removal of three existing spaces on the far east side of the building to improve site functionality. The Commission may approve the proposed parking reduction. Relevant considerations include anticipated staffing during peak shifts, vehicle inventory, customer traffic, walk-up versus vehicle traffic, transit availability, seasonal operations, and other unique characteristics of the business or site.

Although the applicant indicated that vehicles will not be delivered by tractor-trailers or semitrucks, the ordinance requires one loading space for a use involving the receipt or distribution of vehicles. The applicant must provide a loading space or obtain relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals. A loading space is not permitted in an exterior side yard, so a proposed space in that location would also require a variance.

No pedestrian connection is shown from the Halsted Road sidewalk. The Commission may waive this requirement after considering whether a connection is practical and whether it would likely be used at this location.

Landscaping, Screening, Lighting, and Exterior Materials

The ordinance requires four parking lot trees based on the amount of paved area; only one tree exists near the northeast corner of the site. The Commission may determine that the existing landscaping condition may remain as a nonconformity.

Because the LI-1 property is separated from residential property by Halsted Road, a greenbelt may substitute for the otherwise required wall or berm. The Commission must determine whether the existing ornamental grasses along Halsted Road adequately satisfy the greenbelt requirement or whether additional plantings are necessary.

The Commission may also waive additional deciduous tree plantings if they would not provide meaningful screening. A gas line, culvert, and planned right of way create conflicts in the eastern yard, and trees planted there could be removed if the right of way is expanded. The remaining available green space is in front of the building and would not provide additional screening of the parking lot. The applicant submitted an inventory of existing trees, primarily south of the building, and no tree removal is proposed.

No changes are proposed to the existing exterior lighting. The current fixtures are nonconforming and do not appear to be fully shielded. Any future replacement fixtures must be fully shielded and comply with current ordinance standards.

No modifications to the building exterior are shown. The existing exterior materials may remain if no changes are proposed. Any future exterior modifications would be required to comply with current material standards.

Commission Decision Points

Before acting on the site plan, the Commission must determine whether to permit 39 parking spaces in place of the required 49 spaces, whether to waive the required pedestrian connection, whether additional parking lot trees are required or the existing condition may remain, whether the ornamental grasses along Halsted Road adequately satisfy the greenbelt requirement, and whether additional deciduous trees are required in the eastern yard. Other administrative items may be addressed as conditions of approval if the Commission finds that the plan otherwise meets ordinance requirements.

Commission discussion and questions

Lighting and Landscaping

Commissioner Mantey questioned whether the existing exterior lighting could remain unchanged if it does not comply with current shielding requirements. He noted that the property is across Halsted Road from a multifamily residential development and expressed concern that unshielded fixtures could shine into nearby apartments. He asked whether the Commission could require the applicant to shield or replace the lights as a condition of approval.

Planning Consultant Auerbach stated that past practice has been to allow existing lighting to remain when no installation or modification is proposed. He cited Section 34-5.16 of the Zoning Ordinance, which requires review and compliance when outdoor lighting installation or modification is part of a development requiring site plan approval. Further review would be needed to determine whether the Commission could require changes to fixtures that are not proposed for modification. Commissioner

Mantey noted that another ordinance provision may prohibit lighting that illuminates neighboring properties.

Commissioner Mantey also discussed the parking lot tree requirement. He asked whether an additional tree placed near the parking area could qualify as a parking lot tree and suggested locating a tree near the blank southern wall as a beautification and screening measure. Planning Consultant Auerbach stated that the Commission has discretion regarding tree distribution and may require additional trees.

Building and Exterior Conditions

Commissioner Brickner confirmed that the proposed change from office use to auto sales and repair primarily involves interior alterations. He noted that the proposed paint booth would be subject to applicable Engineering Department and Fire Department requirements.

Commissioner Brickner asked where additional parking lot trees could be placed, because the site already has fewer parking spaces than required. He observed that the building faces Hallwood Court rather than Halsted Road and asked whether the City has plans to expand the Hallwood Court roadway into the existing right of way. Planning Consultant Auerbach stated that he was not aware of any roadway expansion plans or the history of that right of way.

Commissioner Brickner supported reusing the building, which has been vacant since 2018, for a use permitted in the LI-1 District. He asked whether rooftop mechanical equipment screening and other exterior nonconformities could remain because the building predates current ordinance standards. Planning Consultant Auerbach responded that existing nonconformities may generally remain when no exterior changes are proposed. Any modified lighting or other exterior feature would be required to comply with current standards.

Commissioner Brickner suggested that an additional tree could be planted if space is available or that the applicant could contribute to the tree fund.

Regarding the existing lighting, Planning Consultant Auerbach pointed out that most fixtures appear to be on the north elevation, with one fixture on the south elevation and apparently none on the east elevation facing Halsted Road.

Commissioner Brickner also asked about the dumpster enclosure. Planning Consultant Auerbach stated that the enclosure would not be permitted in its current yard location for a new development, but its location meets the required setback from residential property and applicable area requirements. The applicant must confirm that the enclosure is adequately screened.

Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals Authority

Commissioner Countegan confirmed that the proposed use is permitted in the LI-1 District. He also confirmed that the Planning Commission has discretion to determine whether to waive the pedestrian connection, require additional trees, and permit 39 parking spaces instead of the required 49 spaces.

Planning Consultant Auerbach noted that the driveway intersection offset requirement is specific to automobile sales and was not applicable to the prior office use. Because the driveway offset and loading space issues arise from the proposed new use, relief from those requirements must be obtained from

the Zoning Board of Appeals. He further stated that Planning Commission site plan review is required because the change from office use to auto sales and repair is a more intensive use.

Commissioner Countegan stated that he wanted to hear whether the applicant intends to seek the required Zoning Board of Appeals variances and how the applicant proposes to address the exceptions that are within the Planning Commission's discretion.

Zoning Board of Appeals Variances and Existing Nonconformities

Chair Lindquist asked how many variances would be required from the Zoning Board of Appeals if the Planning Commission approved the plan to the limit of its authority. Planning Consultant Auerbach stated that three non-use variances would be required: a variance from the loading space requirement, a related variance because a loading space is not permitted in an exterior side yard, and a variance from the driveway intersection offset requirement.

Planning Consultant Auerbach clarified that the dumpster location and right-of-way setback conditions are existing nonconformities and do not require new variances because the applicant is not expanding the building or increasing those nonconformities. An expansion outside a required setback would not necessarily require Zoning Board of Appeals relief, while an expansion within a required setback would.

Change of Use and Site Plan Review

Commissioner Countegan asked whether a business similar to the prior use could obtain a change of occupancy administratively without site plan or variance review. Planning Consultant Auerbach responded that a less intensive use could potentially be processed administratively. The proposed change to automobile sales and repair is a more intensive use that requires additional parking and Planning Commission waivers, which triggers site plan review.

Chair Lindquist confirmed that the three anticipated variances are non-use variances and that no use variance is required because the proposed use is permitted in the LI-1 District.

Paint Booth and Special Approval

Commissioner Stimson asked whether the proposed paint booth would require special approval under the provisions governing painting, burnishing, and undercoating. Planning Consultant Auerbach and City Planner Mulville-Friel stated that special approval is not required because the paint booth is an ancillary secondary use customarily associated with the used motor vehicle sales operation. A standalone spray painting or undercoating facility would require special approval.

Pedestrian Connection

Commissioner Grant confirmed that the Planning Commission has authority to require or waive the pedestrian connection. Staff clarified that the connection would be from the existing public sidewalk on Halsted Road to the principal building entrance. Because there is no sidewalk on Hallwood Court, a connection from that frontage would not be practical. The ordinance does not specify a particular frontage, but requires a convenient pedestrian access between public sidewalks and principal building entrances.

Chair Lindquist clarified that although the building appears to face Hallwood Court, the property has a Halsted Road address and frontage. The issue is not an improvement to the existing Halsted Road sidewalk, but whether a connection should be created from that sidewalk to the building entrance.

Commissioner Mantey questioned the draft motion language suggesting that the pedestrian connection could be waived because it is impractical. No physical limitation had been identified, and the more relevant consideration was whether customers or employees would use the connection. He cautioned that describing a feasible sidewalk or pavement marking as impractical could establish an undesirable precedent. Planning Consultant Auerbach agreed that this was a valid concern and stated that any physical limitations would need to be confirmed.

Commissioner Ware questioned whether a pedestrian route through the existing driveway and parking lot could provide a more efficient and safer connection to the building entrance. Planning Consultant Auerbach stated that the Commission may determine the appropriate route. Although staff comments were based on the ordinance requirement for a connection to a public sidewalk, safe pedestrian circulation within the site is also a valid consideration.

Applicant Presentation and Discussion

Ghassan Abdelnour of GAV & Associates, 24001 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington, was present on behalf of this application. Applicant/owner Hayder Alkhafaji was also present.

Mr. Abdelnour stated that the owner wishes to return to Farmington Hills and establish a business in a building that has been vacant for nearly eight years. The industrial zoning, site location, and existing building configuration allow the proposed use, with most alterations occurring inside the building. Interior work would include reconfiguring the space for vehicle maneuvering and creating a sales area. No structural changes to the building exterior are proposed.

Mr. Abdelnour affirmed that the applicant is willing to work with the City and address Commission concerns. The applicant would shield the existing exterior lighting, construct a pedestrian connection if required, install two or three trees or contribute to the tree fund, repair or improve the dumpster enclosure as necessary, and paint the exterior if required.

Parking and Vehicle Display

Mr. Abdelnour explained that ordinance requirements resulted in the parking spaces along Hallwood Court being reserved for employees or visitors; their use for vehicle display was prohibited. The 14 spaces adjacent to the building were designated for vehicles offered for sale. Visitor parking was placed along Halsted Road as requested by staff.

The applicant also plans to use part of the building for indoor vehicle display, with space for approximately 10 vehicles or as many as the interior layout will accommodate. Outdoor display spaces would be used for additional inventory when necessary.

Commissioner Grant asked how many employees would work at the site. Mr. Abdelnour stated that the business would have six employees. He confirmed that the two barrier-free parking spaces would be reserved for eligible visitors or employees and would not be used for vehicles offered for sale.

Loading and Deliveries

The business does not anticipate receiving vehicles by large trucks or automobile carriers. Vehicles would arrive individually, and the applicant did not believe an exterior loading area was necessary.

Commissioner Mantey noted that supplies and materials for the service areas could be delivered through the existing overhead door beside the dumpster and suggested that loading and unloading could occur inside the building.

Commissioner Brickner asked City Attorney Joppich whether an ordinance-required loading space could be located inside the building. Attorney Joppich stated that receiving activities may occur within a building, but the ordinance addresses the exterior area used to load goods into the building. Commissioner Brickner suggested designating the area immediately in front of the overhead door as a loading area, which would require that the area remain clear of parked vehicles.

Chair Lindquist noted that the proposed use involves the receipt of complete vehicles as inventory and that vehicle loading and unloading would occur outside the building. Planning Consultant Auerbach confirmed that the applicant's narrative states that large vehicle carriers would not be used. The site plan review applies to the proposed use rather than only to the current operator, so the loading needs of a future automobile sales business must also be considered.

Parking Allocation and Vehicle Inventory

Noting that the plan provides 39 total spaces, Commissioner Countegan sought clarification regarding the applicant's parking needs and the representation that staff and customer parking would not exceed 26 spaces. Mr. Ghassan Abdelnour and applicant Hayder Alkhafaji explained that a maximum of 14 spaces adjacent to the building would be used for outdoor vehicle display. Additional inventory would be displayed inside the showroom, which was expected to accommodate approximately 10 to 12 vehicles.

Chair Lindquist questioned the apparent imbalance between the number of outdoor display spaces and the remaining employee and customer spaces. The applicant explained that Planning Department requirements prohibit vehicle inventory from being displayed in spaces located within the right of way or the applicable setback. Outdoor inventory is therefore limited to the designated spaces next to the building. The remaining spaces are reserved for employees and customers.

Mr. Alkhafaji stated that if additional inventory space is needed in the future, he may lease space elsewhere. The outdoor display limit reflects the site constraints and City requirements.

Business Operations and Customer Traffic

Commissioner Countegan asked whether the business would operate primarily by appointment or receive walk-in customers. Mr. Alkhafaji stated that used vehicle sales would occur largely by appointment. Vehicles would be listed online, and many customers would come to the site to inspect or pick up a specific vehicle. The business would have six employees and was not expected to generate the level of customer traffic associated with a traditional vehicle dealership. Business activity and customer traffic would be limited. Vehicle repair would occur inside the building, and no repairs would be performed outside.

Flexible Use of Employee and Customer Spaces

Commissioner Grant questioned why the plan appeared to designate 18 spaces for employees when the business would have only six employees and only five spaces were labeled for customers. Mr. Alkhafaji explained that the spaces already exist and reiterated that they cannot be used for vehicle inventory because of the site restrictions. He agreed that the spaces could be used by either customers or employees.

Planning Consultant Auerbach confirmed that the spaces labeled for employees and customers may be used flexibly according to operational needs. Those spaces may not be used for vehicle inventory.

Halsted Road Landscaping

Commissioner Mantey commented on the existing ornamental grasses along Halsted Road. Based on his observation of the site, the grasses were green, tall, and attractive. In his opinion, the existing landscaping appeared to provide effective screening.

Motion

Motion by Countegan, support by Trafelet, to grant preliminary site plan approval for SP 55-6-2026, Car Experts Auto Sales and Auto Care proposal, based on information provided by the applicants, the July 10, 2026 Carlisle Wortman review letter, the June 18, 2026 City Engineer review letter, and the June 18, 2026 Fire Marshal review letter, and the findings that the proposal **meets** the requirements of Section 34-6.1 of the City of Farmington Hills Zoning Ordinance and applicable Zoning Ordinance requirements, subject to the following:

- The proposed thirty-nine(39) parking spaces may be permitted. As discussed this evening, the existing 39 spaces will be more than adequate, and the 49 spaces that are required will not be necessary.
- Regarding the pedestrian connection, a pedestrian connection is not necessary. The connection on the existing sidewalk on Halsted Road will serve the pedestrian needs in this area, which is an industrial park area that goes into Hallwood. Placing a sidewalk to the west would impact some site plan issues as relates to the proposed plan. The existing sidewalk on Halsted suffices.
- Relative to the parking lot trees, the existing non-conforming number of parking lot trees may remain. In this case, there was no need for additional trees. The building has been long-standing, and is attractive even though it has not been in use for seven or eight years. It has been maintained, and the proponents have affirmed they will maintain the property in good order.
- The ornamental grasses are adequate as a greenbelt alternative to installing a wall or berm as permitted under Section 34-5.15.1.A.
- Per Sections 34-5.15.1.C and D, additional trees do not need to be planted on the Halsted Road frontage. Additional trees would conflict with utilities and are not effective screening for this area.

Approval is also subject to the following conditions:

1. The site plan must be updated to indicate that the barrier-free spaces will not be used for vehicle display.
2. The existing drive does not comply with the intersection offset requirement listed under Section 34-4.36.1.B. The applicant must either revise the plan to comply with the intersection offset requirement or obtain a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.
3. Dumpster enclosure details must be provided to demonstrate the enclosure is in good condition and provides adequate screening.

4. A loading space is not designated on the plan. The applicant must provide the required loading space or obtain a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals from Section 34-5.4.3.C, loading space requirement, and Section 34-05.4.3.D, loading space setback requirements.
5. The hours of operation specified in Section 34-5.16.3.B.v must be noted on the site plan.
6. The applicant must confirm whether any exterior building renovations are proposed.
7. All items identified in the July 10, 2026 Carlisle Wortman review letter shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Planner.
8. All items identified in the June 18, 2026 City Engineer review letter shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Engineer.
9. All items identified in the June 18, 2026 Fire Marshal review letter shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Fire Marshal.

Motion Discussion

Chair Lindquist agreed with nearly all portions of the motion but favored requiring a pedestrian access from the Halsted Road sidewalk to the southwest edge of the building. Because Hallwood Court has no sidewalk, the site otherwise has no connection to a pedestrian route.

Commissioner Stimson stated that he would normally support a pedestrian connection, but in this case supported the motion as presented. Based on the site photographs, there is no walkway in front of the building, and the proposed route appears to terminate at a parking space or the building. When the barrier-free spaces are occupied, there would be insufficient room to continue to the entrance.

Chair Lindquist clarified that he envisioned a route extending directly from the southwest corner of the building to the existing Halsted Road sidewalk, rather than along the Hallwood Court facing side.

Commissioner Stimson reiterated that the route would still end where parking and the building prevent a practical connection to the entrance.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES June 18, 2026

MOTION by Brickner, supported by Grant, to approve the June 18, 2026 regular meeting minutes as submitted.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Terry Sever, 1883 Teakwood, White Lake, Michigan 48383, requested clarification regarding a lot split application he had submitted on June 23, 2026. He questioned whether a purchase agreement must be notarized when submitted in place of the property owner's signature, and asserted that the City's 45-day review period was underway.

Chair Lindquist stated that the Planning Commission could not address an administrative matter not before it, and should avoid discussion that could prejudice a future decision. City Attorney Joppich agreed to review the application requirements and applicable timeline with the Planning Director.

Commissioner Countegan requested general clarification regarding whether a notarized purchase agreement is required and how the applicable review is calculated.

COMMISSIONER/STAFF COMMENTS

The Commission welcomed Commissioner Banks. Commissioner Banks stated that he had served on the Zoning Board of Appeals and was pleased to continue serving the City as a member of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Ware asked about the status of the previously requested Tree Fund report. City Planner Mulville-Friel stated that staff was still preparing the report and would provide the information at the August meeting.

Commissioner Grant asked about the status of proposed training sessions. City Planner Mulville-Friel stated that Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals members have access to training and workshops through their Michigan Association of Planning memberships. Staff also plans to conduct an internal workshop with assistance from Carlisle Wortman, although a date has not been scheduled. Staff expects to discuss scheduling with Carlisle Wortman at the July 20 joint meeting of the Planning Commission, City Council, and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Commissioner Stimson noted that a Michigan Association of Planning training he attended after joining the Commission was informative and particularly helpful to a new Commissioner.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Grant, supported by Ware, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting ended at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Tanji Grant
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem