

**CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD  
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN  
AUGUST 21, 2025, 7:30 P.M.**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The Planning Commission Regular Meeting was called to order by Chair Trafelet at 7:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present: Aspinall, Mantey, Stimson, Trafelet, Varga, Ware (arrived 7:32pm)

Commissioners Absent: Brickner, Countegan, Grant

Others Present: Staff Planner II Mulville-Friel, Planning Consultants Tangari and Upfal (Giffels Webster), Staff Engineer Emerson, City Attorney Saarela

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**MOTION by Stimson, support by Varga, to approve the agenda as published.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**A. SITE PLAN 57-5-2025**

**LOCATION:** 31015 Grand River Ave.

**PARCEL I.D.:** 22-23-35-101-005

**PROPOSAL:** New or used car salesroom, showroom or office when the main use is carried on within a building with open air display of vehicles as accessory in B-3, General Business District

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Site Plan approval

**APPLICANT:** Designhaus Architecture

**OWNER:** Toyco Collision LLC

**Consultant comments**

Referencing the August 7, 2025 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Upfal provided an overview of the site, located at the northwest corner of Orchard Lake and Grand River. The triangular 3.54-acre parcel is developed with an 18,738-square-foot one-story building and associated parking; it is currently vacant. The applicant proposes to redevelop the property for new and used car sales, including online sales.

Planning Consultant Upfal highlighted the following outstanding issues:

- Clarification is needed on whether vehicles will be displayed outside, as the current plans do not show any display vehicles.
- There is an existing non-conformity with the front yard open space.
- Both frontages include a landscape area, but the extent of the landscape area is not labeled and appears to be smaller than 10'. This is an existing condition.
- Dumpster location needs to be provided.
- A floor plan is required to determine parking calculations and review compliance.

- The proposed arrangement of parking is disjointed, resulted in a fractured circulation pattern. This is especially notable in the rear at the angled parking. This may be acceptable if these spaces are not intended for public use, but this is unclear from the information presented.
- Insufficient maneuvering between westernmost access point and parking spaces (not labeled)
- Maneuvering appears insufficient between parking and building along the frontage.
- Parking spaces vary in size and dimensions are not labeled. In many circumstances parking spaces do not meet the dimensional requirements of the ordinance.
- Four barrier free spaces are required, including one van accessible space. Only one was provided.
- Corner clearance triangles should be indicated on the plan. The building canopy appears to potentially conflict with the driveway clearance area, but this is an existing condition.
- The applicant shall label the species information for all landscaping used towards the planting requirements on the landscape plan on sheet AS1.1 that aligns with the inventory provided.
- The paved area was not provided to determine whether existing plantings are compliant.
- The westernmost block of parking facing Grand River is insufficiently screened.
- A hedge wall of shrubs was not included in the planter box
- Notes regarding lighting and operating hours must be added in accordance with item 14 in this report
- The height of light poles was not provided.
- Building elevation photometrics are required demonstrating illumination of building wall
- The average to minimum illumination ratio was not provided
- No pedestrian connections to the public sidewalk are proposed at this time and should be added.

Commissioner Mantey noted the unusually high number of outstanding issues (19) requiring administrative approval. He pointed out a paved area of the site previously identified as a wetland, noting the importance of recognizing that wetlands can be developed with proper permitting.

Planning Consultant Upfal explained that wetland delineations must be updated every three years and that past approvals may have allowed development on the site. Consultant Tangari added that wetland mitigation typically requires the creation of replacement wetlands elsewhere through EGLE (Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) permitting.

### **Applicant presentation**

Hunter Galbraith of Designhaus Architecture, representing Huntington Auto Group, stated that the site was historically a car dealership, later used as a mechanic shop and later by Service Masters. The current request is to restore its dealership use. Mr. Galbraith noted that previous review comments had been addressed in revised submissions and additional information had been provided. Planning Consultant Upfal clarified that while some responses were received, approximately half of the comments remained unresolved or were not reflected on the updated plans.

### **Commission discussion and action**

Chair Traftlet asked whether the Commission should postpone the matter given the number of outstanding issues. City Attorney Saarela advised that the Commission could approve the application subject to conditions, delegating responsibility to the City Planner to verify that revisions are made in accordance with Giffels Webster's August 7 review letter. This approach would allow the project to move forward while ensuring compliance through administrative oversight. Staff Planner Mulville-Friel

noted that the Commission would still need to make determinations on certain non-conformances as part of the motion.

**MOTION by Stimson, support by Aspinall that Application for Site Plan Approval 57-5-2025, dated May 8, 2025, as revised, submitted by Designhaus Architecture, be approved, because it appears to meet all applicable requirements of the Zoning Chapter, subject to the following conditions:**

- 1) All outstanding issues identified in Giffels Webster's August 7, 2025 review shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Planner;**
- 2) All outstanding issues identified in the City Engineer's July 28, 2025 interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Engineer; and**
- 3) All outstanding issues identified in the Fire Marshal's July 29, 2025 interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Fire Marshal.**

**And with the following determination:**

- **Existing non-conformances can remain as non-conformances.**

Motion discussion:

Commissioner Mantey expressed concern about outstanding issues not fully covered in the motion. He emphasized the need to resolve three additional matters: (1) confirmation of display vehicle use on the site; (2) a parking setback less than 10 feet from the property line; and (3) excess illumination above 0.3 foot-candles at the Orchard Lake driveway. Commissioner Mantey opposed granting an exemption for lighting non-conformance, arguing that lower ambient lighting contributes to the city's aesthetic appeal.

Planning Consultant Upfal clarified that if display vehicles were to be included, they must be specifically identified on the plan to avoid skewing parking calculations. Consultant Tangari confirmed that display vehicles should not be counted toward parking requirements, and exceeding or falling short of the required parking spaces would necessitate a return to the Commission.

Regarding outdoor display vehicles, Staff Planner Mulville-Friel pointed out that in the B-3 General Business District, accessory outdoor display vehicles are limited to the same number of vehicles permitted indoors. This would prevent the site from operating as a large outdoor lot. However, this site would not meet the City's requirements for outdoor sales of rental or new and used vehicles because it has frontage on a side street as well as Grand River Avenue.

Discussion confirmed that illumination levels exceeding 0.3 foot-candles occurred only at the Orchard Lake driveway and were considered acceptable by other Commissioners for safety.

The amount of setback less than 10' from the property line would be reviewed administratively.

**Motion approved 5-1 by voice vote (Mantey opposed).**

**B. SITE PLAN 59-7-2025**

<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>33474 Eight Mile Rd.</b>
<b>PARCEL I.D.:</b>	<b>22-23-33-477-022</b>
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	<b>Construct a new medical dentistry office building on a vacant lot</b>

<b>ACTION REQUESTED:</b>	<b>in B-3, General Business District</b>
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	<b>Site Plan approval</b>
<b>OWNER:</b>	<b>Iden Kalabat</b>
	<b>HK Holdings, LLC</b>

#### **Consultant comments**

Referencing the July 29, 2025 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Tangari gave the background and review for this request for construction of a 7,163 square foot dental office on a 0.9-acre vacant parcel located at 33474 Eight Mile Road. The site, zoned B-3 General Business District, would be accessed via existing marginal access drives, avoiding a new direct driveway onto Eight Mile Road. Surrounding zoning includes RA-3 to the north, commercial to the south in Livonia, and office uses to the east and west. The proposed medical office is a permitted use in this district.

Dimensional standards were generally met, although building height was not specified on the plans. Setbacks appeared to be compliant. Parking calculations provided by the applicant were based on gross floor area, but when recalculated on usable floor area, 41 spaces were required instead of 50, leaving nine excess spaces on the plan. The Commission may wish to discuss removing some spaces to reduce pavement. Parking stalls met standards. The required loading space was not shown on the plans; one could be designated in one of the excess spaces. Landscaping was generally adequate, but the tree replacement survey was inconsistent and confusing, requiring resubmittal to confirm removals and replacements. Lighting required only minor adjustments. Tree replacement remained the main deficiency.

Commissioner Mantey observed that 20 replacement trees were required, while only 18 were proposed. Planning Consultant Tangari noted the tree survey inconsistencies made verification difficult. Commissioner Mantey suggested that if the applicant reduced parking spaces, the additional area could be used for the needed replacement trees.

#### **Applicant presentation**

Iden Kalabat, Kalabat Engineering, 31333 Southfield Road, Ste 250, Beverly Hills, said that they would clean up the tree survey and provide the required tree replacements on site. Some parking spaces could be removed. However, the dental practice anticipates significant staff and patient parking needs, so a few of the extra spaces may remain. Mr. Kalabat said that all planning, engineering, and fire department comments could be addressed administratively.

#### **Commission action**

**MOTION by Varga, support by Stimson, that Application for Site Plan Approval 59-7-2025, dated July 1, 2025, as revised, submitted by Iden Kalabat, be approved, because it appears to meet all applicable requirements of the Zoning Chapter, subject to the following conditions:**

- 1. All outstanding issues identified in Giffels Webster's July 29, 2025 review shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Planner;**
- 2. All outstanding issues identified in the City Engineer's July 17, 2025 interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the City Engineer; and**
- 3. All outstanding issues identified in the Fire Marshal's July 14, 2025 interoffice correspondence shall be addressed to the reasonable satisfaction of the Fire Marshal.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**C. PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT QUALIFICATION 1, 2025**

**LOCATION:** 30275 Thirteen Mile Rd.  
**PARCEL I.D.:** 22-23-11-126-027  
**PROPOSAL:** Construct six (6) new ranch-style, attached dwelling units in OS-1, Office Service District  
**ACTION REQUESTED:** Planning Commission approval  
**APPLICANT:** Schafer Development, LLC  
**OWNER:** Metropolitan Detroit Baptist Manor

**Consultant comments**

Referencing the July 24, 2025 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Tangari gave the background and review for this requested PUD Qualification for a proposal to construct six attached ranch-style dwelling units on the Baptist Manor property at Thirteen Mile Road. The 1.64-acre site contains an existing office at the southern end and open lawn to the north where the new units are planned. Surrounding land uses include other Baptist Manor facilities, a golf course to the north, and offices to the east. The units were initially considered to offset removal of three units tied to a separate condo project, but as of this application, the six units are proposed independently.

The property is zoned OS-1, where townhouses are not a permitted use. However, the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process may allow this use as a deviation. The proposed density aligns with the RC-1 district standards that apply to most of Baptist Manor. Plans included within the request for qualification are general and conceptual at this point, but it does appear that relief from certain setback requirements may also be requested at later stages.

Under Section 34-3.20.2, the Planning Commission may make a determination that the site qualifies for a PUD based on ordinance-based criteria and procedures. The criteria were listed in the July 24 memorandum. Criterion E states that one of 8 possible objectives must be met. The applicant has cited three objectives that they feel they meet:

- i. To permanently preserve open space or natural features because of their exceptional characteristics or because they can provide a permanent transition or buffer between land uses.

*The applicant's response indicates that the developer believes this site can provide an overall transition from commercial and office development to the east and the multi-family senior housing to the west, of which the new units would be part; 38 of the off-site trees from the PUD including Tabernacle would be planted here. However, the site itself has essentially no natural features at present; open space that remains after these units are built would be characterized by its intentional design.*

- iv. To provide alternative uses for parcels which can provide transition buffers to residential areas.

*The applicant's response echoes the response to item i above, with a focus on the development itself and its relationship to the existing Baptist Manor development.*

- vii. To foster the aesthetic appearance of the city through quality building design and site development, the provision of trees and landscaping beyond minimum requirements; the preservation of unique and/or historic sites or structures; and the provision of open space or other desirable features of a site beyond minimum requirements.

*The applicant's response cites high-quality architecture and extensive landscaping as ways this development will meet this criterion.*

Planning Consultant Tangari explained that per the ordinance, PUDs cannot be used solely to increase density or avoid variances. This proposal is not density-driven but does shift a parcel from office to residential use. This stage involves PUD qualification only; a later phase will include detailed plans, deviations, and a public hearing.

Commissioner Mantey noted that the Commission must determine whether the project qualifies for PUD based on the objectives cited. While the proposal appeared compatible, with multifamily-style housing to the east and offices to the west, he was concerned that the objectives cited by the applicant were weak, particularly the claim of preserving open space, as the parcel contained no natural features. Establishing a transition buffer between land uses was also questionable, since the proposal replaced office with residential rather than serving as a true buffer. He also questioned the reliance on quality building materials as justification, stating that the city's new ordinance already required high-quality materials. While he was supportive of the project in principle, the objectives cited did not give a strong legal rationale to justify PUD qualification approval. He suggested that the most defensible objective was: *ii. To permanently establish land use patterns which are compatible or which will protect existing or planned uses.*

#### **Applicant presentation**

Aaron Schafer, Schafer Development, was present on behalf of this application for PUD qualification. Steven Schafer was also present, as was Ryan Goleski, Detroit Baptist Manor Director of Operations.

Aaron Schafer explained that this project was intertwined with the PUD qualification for Mulberry Park/Tabernacle, which was approved for PUD qualification in October, 2024. That initial qualification was for 76 units, but over the course of various meetings before the Planning Commission and City Council, the number of units had been reduced to 63, well within what is allowed in the RC-1 district. Most recently, the Mulberry Park/Tabernacle project had been denied by City Council, but based on a further reading of the Master Plan, the applicants were going to present a revised plan at Council's first meeting in September. In the meantime, Baptist Manor is moving forward with tonight's 6-unit PUD proposal, which will provide housing for residents displaced by planned demolition of the duplex that will be eliminated fronting 13 Mile Road, and three older duplexes behind that, as part of the phased development of the greater Mulberry Park/Tabernacle project.

Mr. Schafer reiterated that the 1.64 acre site is in the OS-1 district, and is master planned for multifamily use. The proposed six-unit ranch building would provide an appropriate transition between office uses to the west and Baptist Manor's RC-1 multifamily housing to the east. The six units would be identical in design to those proposed in the Tabernacle project: age-restricted (55+), single-story ranches with zero-barrier entry, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, two-car garages, and approximately 1,300 square feet

each. The project would not be standalone. If the larger Mulberry/Tabernacle project does not proceed, this project would also likely not advance.

Mr. Schafer presented two options that were before City Council currently for mitigating the deficit of 67 replacement trees from the Tabernacle project: (1) planting along the Thirteen Mile frontage of Baptist Manor, creating a new landscaped corridor; or (2) planting larger evergreens along the southern property line near Holly Hill Farms. Their preference was for planting along the frontage, which would transform the corridor and enhance pedestrian connectivity to Orchard Lake Road.

#### **Commission discussion and action**

Commissioner Ware asked about responsibility for winter maintenance of sidewalks. Mr. Goleski confirmed that Baptist Manor would continue to handle all snow removal and maintenance along Thirteen Mile Road.

Commissioner Varga sought clarification on whether the new units were specifically intended to house residents displaced by the Tabernacle development. Mr. Schafer explained that older units on the Baptist Manor campus would be removed as part of the modernization efforts, and the six-unit ranch would serve as relocation housing before demolition occurs. Relocation would be managed through Baptist Manor's existing rental agreements.

Baptist Manor representative Ryan Goleski further explained Baptist Manor operations, noting the Manor serves residents 55 and older and includes apartments, condos, and a 59-bed assisted living facility. He highlighted the high demand for duplex and fourplex units, which have carried a three-year waitlist for decades. He emphasized that the six-unit ranch would help meet demand and provide residents with transitional downsizing options before they moved to apartments or assisted living.

Commissioner Stimson asked whether the proposed development would be consistent with RC-1 density. Planning Consultant Tangari confirmed it would match the RC-1 density of the broader Baptist Manor community. Commissioner Stimson asked whether rezoning the property to RC-1 might be more straightforward than pursuing a PUD, as he had difficulty in seeing how the proposal qualified as a PUD on its own. Mr. Schafer responded that while rezoning was considered, setback requirements in the OS-1 district created development challenges requiring a ZBA variance, and the PUD route was seen as more viable to ensure flexibility and provide housing for the displaced Baptist Manor residents.

Commissioner Stimson asked whether the site could be combined with the adjacent Mulberry Park/Tabernacle PUD, despite being separated by another parcel. Planning Consultant Tangari said that Farmington Hills' ordinance did not appear to include a contiguity standard so such a combination might be possible. City Attorney Saarala pointed out the impracticality of combining this proposal with the Mulberry Park/Tabernacle PUD, in terms of where the project was in the approval process. Mr. Schafer observed that the projects were inherently different—one being new development, the other redevelopment—making consolidation less practical.

Commissioner Stimson reiterated his struggle to justify the proposal as a standalone PUD, though combining it with the larger PUD could strengthen its case.

Commissioner Mantey suggested that the narrowness of the parcel created practical development constraints. He reasoned that designating the site as a PUD was the most effective way to ensure compatibility with neighboring residential and office uses. By granting a PUD, the Commission could allow relief from strict setback requirements while achieving land use patterns consistent with adjacent properties. Planning Consultant Tangari affirmed that this interpretation could be used to justify qualification, emphasizing that the Commission had authority to determine compatibility under PUD standards.

**MOTION by Manty, support by Varga, to make a preliminary finding that PUD 1, 2025, dated June 20, 2025, submitted by Schafer Development LLC., qualifies for the Planned Unit Development Option under Section 34-3.20.2.A through D. of the Zoning Chapter, and it is further determined that the proposal meets at least one (1) of the objectives as outlined in Section 34-3.20.2.E.i. through viii.**

**The Planning Commission finds:**

- 1. The proposed plan preliminarily PUD meets the following qualification standard of Section 34-3-20-2.E.i. thru viii:**
  - ii. To permanently establish land use patterns which are compatible or which will protect existing or planned uses, in that given the narrowness of the lot, the proposed development is more compatible with the existing development to the east and to the west than the existing development or any development that could be made given the current zoning.**

**Motion passed 5-1 by voice vote (Stimson opposed).**

**D. CLUSTER SITE PLAN 54-4-2025**

<b>LOCATION:</b>	South side of Folsom Road, between Parker Avenue and Lundy Drive,
<b>PARCEL I.D.:</b>	22-23-34-252-019, 020, 021, 022, 023, 024, 025, 026, 027, 028, 030, 031, 032, 033, 034, and 043
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Construct thirty-three (33) single-family detached units within RA-3, One Family Residential District
<b>ACTION REQUESTED:</b>	Set for Planning Commission Public Hearing
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Forest at Riverwalk Development, LLC
<b>OWNER:</b>	Forest at Riverwalk Development, LLC

**Consultant comments**

Referencing the July 22, 2025 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Tangari explained that the action before the Commission was to set a public hearing for the proposed cluster development, located south of Folsom, between Parker and Lundy. The project had been previously qualified by the Planning Commission at the lower allowed density level, consistent with the proposed 33 units. Outstanding issues included verifying the accuracy of the tree inventory, as many survey tags were obscured by bark growth, and clarifying landscaping as the method of transition between the development and surrounding neighborhoods. Detailed discussion of these issues would occur during the public hearing.

**Applicant presentation**

Stuart Michaelson, Forest at Riverwalk, 31355 W. 13 Mile Road, said that they had previously appeared before the Planning Commission twice—first for cluster qualification, and later for a public hearing



confirming qualification. They had since obtained an EGLE (Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) wetland permit, after more than a year of review and negotiation. The plan presented this evening had addressed all wetlands issues to EGLE's satisfaction, and the applicant was now seeking Planning Commission approval to proceed to public hearing for the project itself.

#### **Commissioner discussion and action**

Chair Trafelet clarified that the Commission's task was limited to scheduling a public hearing, anticipated to be on September 18, 2025.

Commissioner Mantey described difficulties locating property lines and buffer lines during a recent site visit, due to tree tags from the tree survey being obscured by bark, raising questions about the survey's age and validity. He also pointed out potential discrepancies between resident fence locations and property lines, which could complicate enforcement of the proposed 35-foot preserve/buffer. He cautioned that some residents might claim encroachment rights based on historic fence placement. Mr. Michaelson responded that their survey confirmed property boundaries and would identify any encroachments.

**MOTION by Aspinall, supported by Ware, that the application for Cluster Site Plan Approval 54-4-2025, dated February 25, 2025, as revised, submitted by Forest at Riverwalk Development, LLC, be set for public hearing at the Planning Commission's next available regular meeting.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

The Chair called a short recess at 8:51pm and reconvened the meeting at 8:54pm.

#### **E. AMEND PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT 2, 2023, INCLUDING SITE PLAN 67-9-2023**

<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>30825 and 31361 Orchard Lake Road</b>
<b>PARCEL I.D.:</b>	<b>22-23-03-226-027 and 028</b>
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	<b>Redevelop shopping center in B-2, Community Business Zoning District</b>
<b>ACTION REQUESTED:</b>	<b>Set for Planning Commission Public Hearing</b>
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	<b>Frank Jarbou (formerly Timothy Collier)</b>
<b>OWNER:</b>	<b>Hunter's Square Development, LLC</b>

#### **Consultant comments**

Referencing the August 11, 2025 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Tangari provided the background and review for this request to set a requested amendment for PUD 2, 2023, including Site Plan 67-9-2023, for public hearing.

Page 2 of the August 11 memorandum included the summary of changes made to the approved PUD. The applicant is before the Planning Commission to get the revised plans approved before the final development agreement between the city and the applicant is adopted.

Staff had concluded that the revisions were significant enough to qualify as a major amendment, which requires Planning Commission and City Council action, as the amendments affected previously approved deviations from ordinance standards, meaning they must be formally approved and incorporated into the final PUD development agreement. He recommended setting a public hearing for the amendment.

### **Applicant presentation**

Frank Jarbou, Signature Management, described the five proposed changes to the previously approved plan that they felt were most significant. He stated that the development agreement was nearly finalized and that the modifications were necessary to respond to evolving tenant and site needs. Mr. Jarbou characterized the changes as minor, although he acknowledged final determination was up to the Planning Commission:

- Construction of an outdoor cooler for Buffalo Wild Wings due to unit size constraints.
- Conversion of a small northern greenbelt area behind TJ Maxx to parking, previously land-banked.
- Minimal revisions to the rear layout of tenant spaces D-1 and D-2
- Significant revision to building C-1, originally a single 40,000 square foot structure, now divided into two tenant spaces of 25,000 square feet and 15,000 square feet, to reflect market demand. Total square footage remains unchanged.
- Adjustment to parking calculations, with land-banked spaces near truck wells available to meet standards if required.

### **Commission action**

**Motion by Ware, support by Stimson, that the proposed Amendment to PUD 2, 2023, and revised Site Plan 67-9-2023, submitted by Frank Jarbou (formerly Timothy Collier), be set for public hearing for the Planning Commission's next available regular meeting agenda.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

### **F. AMEND PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT 4, 2000**

<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>32555 Northwestern Hwy</b>
<b>PARCEL I.D.:</b>	<b>22-23-02-176-068</b>
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	<b>Use existing building as a catering kitchen, storage, and private event space with new addition and changes to landscape features in B-3, General Business District and RA-4, One-Family Residential District.</b>
<b>ACTION REQUESTED:</b>	<b>Set for Planning Commission Public Hearing</b>
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	<b>Zack Sklar</b>
<b>OWNER:</b>	<b>CEC Farmington, LLC</b>

### **Consultant comments**

Referencing the August 11, 2025 Giffels Webster memorandum, Planning Consultant Upfal provided the background and review for this application to set a proposed amendment to Planned Unit Development 4, 2000 for a public hearing. The site, located at the corner of Orchard Lake Road and Northwestern Highway, has B-3 underlying zoning.

The applicant proposed to repurpose the building for a catering business, storage, and private event space, with the addition of new building space and modifications to landscaping. Key issues included:

- The existing PUD agreement lists specific permitted uses; catering is not among them and would need to be added.
- The current PUD agreement restricts assembly halls to indoor use; outdoor event use would require amendment. The application describes using some of the outdoor space to the west of the building.

- Building materials requirements in the PUD agreement must be met unless, per the PUD agreement, changes are approved by the City Manager.
- Plans were inconsistent: elevations, floor plans, and site plans showed different layouts. Dumpster locations were unclear, with three different placements noted.
- The Applicant proposes removal of the existing pond, located at the front of the building facing Northwestern Highway, and replacing it with extensive native plantings. The pond was listed as a benefit in the original PUD. The Commission must determine whether this change constitutes an equal or greater benefit.
- Clarification of landscaping modifications and species is required for proper evaluation.
- An addition was proposed at the rear of the building.

Planning Consultant Upfal emphasized that the Commission's immediate role was to determine whether the amendment constituted a major or minor change. If deemed major, the application would return for a public hearing with revised, consistent plans.

Commissioner Mantey observed that the proposed addition and pool removal/landscaping were major changes. He questioned the practicality of replacing the pond with an elaborate garden, noting that maintenance could be equally costly.

#### **Applicant presentation**

Zack Sklar, applicant and owner of the building and operator of Cutting Edge Cuisine, explained that the existing space currently functions as a catering kitchen with storage in the front, which he now proposes to convert into an indoor event space for small weddings, showers, and community gatherings. To accommodate this, Mr. Sklar proposed an addition to the back of the building for storage, allowing the front to be repurposed for events.

Mr. Sklar said he would make sure the inconsistencies in the plans would be cleaned up. The dumpster would remain in the same location as it is now.

Mr. Sklar detailed the difficulties with maintaining the pond on the property, noting the excessive water use, ongoing mechanical failures, and continual debris. The pond was very expensive to maintain, and does not align with sustainable practices. He proposed replacing it with a landscaped area of native plantings that would require less maintenance and reflect the city's green values.

#### **Commission discussion and action**

In response to questions from Commissioner Ware, Mr. Sklar confirmed that the proposed landscaping would not be designed as an outdoor gathering or photography area, but rather as a visually attractive and lower-maintenance alternative to the pond.

Commissioner Stimson raised concerns about the proposed building addition, stating that the elevation drawings resembled a pole barn and lacked architectural variation. He requested improved renderings and material samples for the public hearing. Mr. Sklar clarified that the siding would match the existing building, using either EIFS or painted metal, but said he was flexible relative to materials used.

Chair Trafelet expressed concern over the use of EIFS siding, citing safety risks associated with flammability, as well as its vulnerability to physical damage. The use of EIFS was discouraged.

In response to questions, Mr. Sklar said that only indoor events were intended.

Commissioner Mantey said that given the removal of the pond, the project should be considered a major amendment requiring a public hearing.

In response to questions, Mr. Sklar said that:

- The roll-up doors would be located at the back of the building and largely screened from Northwestern Highway, though visible from nearby parking lots such as Home Depot.
- There were no plans for outdoor events.
- He had considered including artwork in front of the building, but had found the cost too high.

Commissioner Mantey emphasized that the removal of the pond was significant, since it had originally been cited as a benefit of the 2000 PUD approval. He requested that staff provide the original list of justifications for that approval to evaluate the relative importance of the pond when considering the amendment. He suggested that if the pond was considered a key justification, an alternative such as enhanced landscaping or possibly artwork might be required to offset its removal.

Mr. Sklar reiterated that the pond had become prohibitively expensive to maintain, citing annual costs of \$4,200 in water alone, in addition to maintenance challenges. He argued that the landscaped garden proposed as a replacement would be more sustainable and aesthetically valuable. Commissioner Ware stressed that the city's art policy required some form of equivalent artistic or aesthetic feature and noted that the landscaped garden could fulfill that role if presented as such.

Mr. Sklar thought the primary issue had been changing parking space counts within the PUD. Planning Consultant Upfal clarified that the parking issue was not a concern but that the use of the site for catering and private events, along with the removal of the pond, required amendment to the PUD agreement.

Mr. Sklar thought the use might not be an issue, as they had obtained a liquor license as a private events – not a catering – use.

Commissioner Varga expressed appreciation for Sklar's investment along Northwestern Highway, noting that replacing a man-made pond with a natural landscaped garden could be seen as an appropriate substitution. She stressed the importance of clarifying the intended use and landscaping details before the public hearing.

**MOTION by Varga, support by Mantey, that the proposed Amendment to PUD 4, 2000, submitted by Zack Sklar, be set for public hearing for the Planning Commission's next available regular meeting agenda, based on the Planning Commission's determination that the removal of the pond is a major change to the original PUD Agreement.**

Motion discussion:

Mr. Sklar said that if the proposed changes constituted a major revision, he would probably not move forward, as the cost of going through a major change to the PUD was too great.

Commissioner Mantey thought that since the motion only referenced the pond, other attendant costs usually associated with a PUD amendment might not have to be incurred. The applicant should work with the Planning and Community Development Director and the Planner regarding this issue.

Planning Consultant Upfal suggested that some landscaping clarifications on other parts of the site could be approved administratively.

**Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.**

**G. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT 1, 2025**

**CHAPTER OF CODE:** 34, Zoning Ordinance

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT:** Amend Zoning Ordinance to add new definitions and Public Art requirements

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Set for Planning Commission Public Hearing

**SECTION:** Amend section 34-2.2 and add Section 34.5.20

Planning Consultant Tangari explained that at the joint meeting with Council it was agreed that the Planning Commission suggestion would be adopted into the text of the draft amendment. The text has been appropriately altered, and now needs to be set for public hearing.

**MOTION by Stimson, support by Aspinall, that draft Zoning Text Amendment 1, 2025, be set for public hearing for the Planning Commission's next available regular meeting agenda.**

**Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** July 17, 2025, Regular Meeting

**MOTION by Aspinall, support by Ware, to approve the July 17, 2025 Regular Meeting minutes as submitted.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**COMMISSIONER/STAFF COMMENTS**

Commissioner Mantey noted that he will not be present at the next meeting when the cluster development on Folsom Road is scheduled for discussion. He pointed out the lack of sidewalks along Folsom Road, particularly the one-quarter mile between Parker Avenue and Lundy Drive, where the existing sidewalk terminates. This stretch of road poses a safety hazard for bicyclists, as traffic travels approximately 40–45 miles per hour and there is only a narrow shoulder of about 1.5 feet. He emphasized the importance of requiring new housing developments along major roads to provide sidewalks and requested that fellow commissioners raise this issue in his absence.

Chair Trafelet recalled that sewer and drainage improvements are already scheduled in the area, and it is hoped that sidewalk installation could be coordinated with that work. Commissioner Mantey reiterated that he found the current conditions unsafe when cycling there and urged that the issue not be overlooked.

Staff Planner Mulville-Friel called the Commission's attention to information in the packets regarding master plan updates from the City of Southfield, City of Novi, and the Village of Franklin.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION by Ware, support by Varga, to adjourn the meeting.**

**Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

The meeting ended at 9:32pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristen Aspinall,  
Planning Commission Secretary