

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
MASTER PLAN STUDY
31555 W ELEVEN MILE ROAD
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICHIGAN
APRIL 18, 2024 5:30 P.M.**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Special Meeting was called to order by Chair Trafelet at 5:30pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Brickner, Mantey, Trafelet, Stimson, Varga, Ware (arrived 6:18pm)

Commissioners Absent: Aspinall, Countegan, Grant

Others Present: Director of Planning and Community Development Kettler-Schmult, City Planner Perdonik, Staff Planner Canty, City Attorney Schultz, City Council Member Knol, Planning Consultants Bahm, Tangari, and Upfal

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

MASTER PLAN STUDY

A. Continued Review Draft Master Plan

Planning Consultant Tangari led the Commission through a final discussion of the 03/14/24 draft 2024 Master Plan, *The Next 50*. The Master Plan text reflects Planning Commission discussions as well as public input, and the final draft will also incorporate tonight’s Planning Commission comments.

All Master Plan Building Blocks and Objectives as listed in Section 03 reflects the Vision Statement:

Farmington Hills will be an innovative, attractive, livable, safe, and financially stable community that embraces the diversity of its people and provides housing and economic opportunity for all residents.

Discussion focused on Sections 05 – 12.

Section 05, Future Land Use, including the Future Land Use Map, descriptions of Future Land Use categories, and Residential Density Map, provides the “meat” of the Master Plan. One of the major differences of this Future Land Use Map versus the last one is that everything that was treated as an overlay last time is applied directly to the main map this time. This Master Plan talks more in terms of *districts* that might arise from the Future Land Use Map. Past overlays have not been as effective as desired in implementing the vision of the City.

A district outlook will provide unified zoning districts rather than a patchwork of zoning districts with an overlay laid on top. Unified district development falls in line with broader developmental strategies discussed over the last two years, including moving the City toward a form-based way of regulating land use and the built environment, and creating a sense of place in those areas where, over time, a unified development scheme results.

About 55% of the City is zoned single-family residential; this will not change. Those residential areas that are not zoned strictly single-family residential might utilize other housing than entirely detached units. A large area in the northwest portion of the City and another south of M-5 have a variety of housing types, but are identified as single-family residential on the map.

If the Master Plan is fully implemented, there will be several direct mixed-use districts in the City; currently there are none. The categories shown on the Future Land Use Map and discussed in Section 05 all work together to carry forward the fundamental character of the community while also providing for new opportunities. Parking standards and design standards, particularly in commercial districts, receive new emphasis and direction.

Regarding planned unit developments (PUDs), more specificity and importance is directed toward community benefits received in exchange for ordinance relief requested by developers who use the PUD tool.

Commissioners noted that cleaning up blight is not/should not be a public benefit under a PUD. Removing blight/keeping a property free of blight is a minimum standard of property ownership, whether that property is developed or undeveloped.

Section 06, Special Planning Areas, includes into two broad categories:

1. Mixed use and non-residential special planning areas
2. Residential special planning areas.

In both cases, the Master Plan provides greater flexibility than previously allowed/

Regarding mixed use and non-residential special planning areas, each area has its own characteristics, but all can benefit by an application of design standards, thinking outside of the box (e.g., office-to-residential conversions), providing safe non-motorized travel paths, establishing a specific identity through public art, and thematic architectural development and use. Social districts that include multiple restaurants can result in more liquor licenses. The Master Plan encourages the development of unique places to go, and supports entrepreneurship.

The Master Plan communicates to developers what the City would like to see. Where this vision is different than what exists, the Master Plan brings developers into that vision.

The Commission reviewed each of the Special Planning Areas as outlined in the draft Master Plan. Each Special Planning Area presents unique challenges and possibilities; all can benefit by the change to districts rather than overlays, with diversified uses, infill developments, and creating a sense of place. Change will occur gradually over time; the Master Plan sets the table for transformation.

Planning Commission suggestions included:

- A mistake of the past was to divide communities via the construction of massive freeways. Replacing the M-5 freeway with a large boulevard with a wide median will have the same unfortunate divisive

effect. Long-term, consider a roundabout at Grand River and Orchard Lake Road, possibly having the freeway end at that location. This would open up the entire area east of Orchard Lake Road.

- Construct walking trails by the river south of Folsom Road.
- Some commercial areas with very narrow lots due to residential uses to the rear might, over the next 50 years, see the commercial lots expand and deepen as homeowners desire to sell, creating a win-win opportunity for all. The zoning needs to reflect this possibility. Perhaps this Master Plan would not show this type of change directly, but could mention in the narrative the direction such development might take.

Regarding residential special planning areas, Planning Consultant Tangari confirmed with the Commission that they wanted to see flex residential use (not flex residential office) on both sides of Orchard Lake Road south of the OCC Campus, and north of 11 Mile Road.

Section 07 – Transportation Plan.

- The Master Plan sets out some of the conceptual basis for *Complete Streets* and increased non-motorized transportation, targeting some areas that can make specific improvements and/or make better connections between two areas. Future pathways should allow pedestrians and bicyclists to avoid high-crash areas across the City.
- The Master Plan should address desired bus service and accompanying amenities. No one will take the bus if taking the bus is arduous. There were no bus shelters in the City except the one that was required as part of the Botsford (now Corewell) PUD. A bus shelter is a mini-placemaking opportunity, and can provide space for public art.
- SMART had agreed to leave the bus stop on Orchard Lake Road south of 14 Mile Road.
- SMART is offering a limited version of its FLEX program within Farmington Hills (not offering city-to-city).

Section 08 – Housing Plan

The City is seeking to improve attainability, and offering potential accommodations to multi-generation households who are living together, including accessory dwelling units. Options should be available for aging in place as well as aging in community. Implementing residential design standards can address these issues.

Section 09 – Arts & Placemaking

Building on the art in City Hall, the Master Plan encourages finding ways to focus on art and creative energy throughout the various neighborhoods and districts. Arts and placemaking contribute to the overall health of residents, and contribute to economic development as well. Arts and placemaking can provide opportunities for community benefits under PUD agreements. As mentioned in previous meetings, “percentage for arts” development fees should be explored. The goal is to establish a sustainable and efficient public arts administration system.

Section 10 – Sustainability & Resiliency

This section lays out sustainability strategies and approaches. This is a very wide category, including such divergent topics as environmental sustainability, as well as addressing vulnerable populations (including linguistic vulnerability), and the need for young people to stay in the City. Such things as power grid and infrastructure sustainability and resiliency fall under this section. Interrelatedness must be acknowledged. For instance, the need for tree canopy must be balanced against consistent power delivery.

Section 11 – Economic Development Plan

The importance of the City’s Economic Development Plan to Master Plan implementation started with the market survey that was launched in 2022. The study attempted to identify marketable opportunities for various uses within the Farmington Hills area, and the office space (including home office space) needed to take advantage of those opportunities. The Economic Development Strategy was developed in concert with Economic Development Director Brockway.

Section 12 - Implementation

The Zoning Plan included in this chapter equates the Future Land Use categories with either existing zoning districts or notes that there isn't a zoning equivalent. The Zoning Plan points the way to amending the Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Map to more closely correlate with the Future Land Use Map.

Commission discussion:

- In general, the draft Master Plan moves the City toward form-based zoning, within the confines of the Euclidean zoning districts that have been used since the City’s first zoning ordinance was implemented. The result is a hybrid code that utilizes both systems, with form-based elements drawing the City toward a certain character of development, draped over the original Euclidean framework.
- New terms such as flex-residential and flex-residential-office do not appear in the current Zoning Ordinance. New ordinances will have to be written to define these terms and develop districts that can use the flex concept.
- The work of the Planning Commission is just beginning in terms of revising the Zoning Ordinance, the biggest implementation tool of the Master Plan vision.

MOTION by Varga, support by Brickner, to request that City Council authorize staff to distribute the draft Master Plan as required by the Michigan Planning and Enabling Act.

Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Planning Consultant Bahm explained that City Council’s approval for distribution will start the 63-day time period, after which the Master Plan will come back to the Planning Commission for public hearing, and final approval and adoption. The Master Plan will be on Council’s agenda on May 13.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Five residents were in attendance.

Paul and Ann Conarty, Metroview, discussed the Metroview special area with the Commission. This area is shown as *single family, cluster* on the Future Land Use Map.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Benefits associates with PUDs should include sustainability elements such as energy efficiency, and low impact development (LID) relative to stormwater management, etc.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Brickner, support by Stimson, to adjourn the Special Meeting at 7:05pm.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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Respectfully Submitted,
Kristen Aspinall
Planning Commission Secretary

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