

**MINUTES  
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS  
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
VIA TELECONFERENCE  
NOVEMBER 5, 2020, 7:30 P.M.**

This meeting was held electronically as authorized under the Open Meetings Act, MCL 15.261, *ET SEQ.*, AS AMENDED. Per the Open Meetings Act, during roll call Commissioners identified their location.

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Stimson called the remote meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:30 pm and gave instructions regarding public participation in the meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Barry Brickner, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan  
Dale Countegan, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan  
Joe Mantey, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan  
Duke Orr, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan  
Steven Schwartz, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan  
Steven Stimson, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan  
John Trafelet, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan  
Robert Turner, City of Farmington Hills, Oakland County, Michigan

Commissioners Absent: None  
One vacancy

Others Present: City Planner Stec, City Attorney Schultz, Planning Consultants Arroyo and Tangari

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION by Orr, support by Trafelet**, to approve the agenda with the following amendment:

- Delete Item 5: Approval of minutes.

Roll call vote:

Yeas: Brickner, Countegan, Mantey, Orr, Schwartz, Stimson, Trafelet, Turner  
Nays: None  
Absent: None  
Abstentions: None

**MOTION carried 8-0.**

**REGULAR MEETING**

- A. **Presentation by Robertson Brothers Homes on a residential development proposal for property on the south side of 13 Mile Road between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt Road**

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss trends in zoning regarding housing types, and to hear a presentation given by Robertson Brothers Homes regarding a concept plan for a residential development proposal. This was a discussion item only; no action was requested.

Planning Consultant Arroyo presented a PowerPoint presentation: *Trends in Zoning to Increase the Variety of Housing Types, Zoning for Increased Housing Choices and Missing Middle Housing.*

Mr. Arroyo's presentation covered the following outline:

- Introduction
  - Most suburban zoning ordinances regulate housing as single-family detached, two family dwellings, and multi-family dwellings
  - Americans are cost burdened by housing: nearly half of renters and a quarter of owner households spend more than 30% of income on housing.
  - High housing costs result from reduced numbers of small, more affordable housing, and the significant trend toward larger homes. Labor, materials, and permitting fee costs have all increased.
  - Housing attainability is very difficult for people with 120% of median income.
  - 30% of households in the US are single persons; by 2025 75%-85% of households will not have children; by 2030, 20% of Americans will be over 65; 1/3 of baby boomers and 2/3 of millennials want to live in "missing middle housing."
- What is Missing Middle Housing?
  - Generally defined as house-scale units containing multiple dwellings.
  - Examples:
    - a. Detached single family units such as cottage court bungalows attractive to seniors; this might be used at the Costick Center frontage.
    - b. Duplexes.
    - c. Fourplexes/quadplexes (small multiplex),
    - d. Hybrid – Single family detached condos.
  - Missing middle housing allows for aging in place in the community, while also allowing younger residents to afford investment in the community. Provides benefits to the buyer and developer, and can provide a positive fiscal impact to the community.
- What are Accessory Dwelling Units?
  - Complete living spaces that are secondary to another primary living space on the property, either contained within the primary home or detached from the home in their own structure.
  - Serve students, empty nesters, grown children, millennials, aging seniors, parents, etc.
  - Seattle, WA and other places have established standards for accessory dwelling units.
- Why can't we do that?
  - Zoning ordinances don't allow,
  - Don't fit in single family or multiple family zoning districts; viewed as too intense, with perceived concerns regarding increased renters in a neighborhood, etc.
- Potential Actions
  - Master Plan amendment to address missing middle housing.
  - Consider whether accessory dwelling units are desirable.
  - Amend the Density Plan in the Master Plan.
  - Create new Zoning District for detached units in a single family district.
  - Potentially permit smaller attached units on lots within the multiple family districts.
  - Consider a new blended residential district that could permit a mix of single family, two family, bungalows, and quadplexes in a single district with appropriate design standards.

- Do nothing.

Planning Commission discussion included:

- Housing types/developments shown in the presentation represented a significant change from the way the City had been Master Planned.
- Commissioner Orr noted that his home in Florida was similar to the smaller single family homes (cottage court bungalow) shown in the presentation.
- Was there any place in Farmington Hills that provided a large enough piece of land to provide for the development shown as “blended residential district?” Planning Consultant Arroyo said that a mix of densities was possible in smaller projects.
- There were already developments in Farmington Hills that utilized some of the concepts presented.
- Would “missing middle housing” fit in older sections of the City, where there were smaller lots with aging housing stock?
- If this type of housing were desired, it would need to be reflected in the Master Plan.
- Could examples be provided of this type of housing in other areas of Michigan?
- Regarding accessory housing, cities including Farmington Hills were trying to eliminate such housing because zoning calls for one house per zoning lot. In some ways allowing accessory housing seemed a backward step.
- The PUD process, as well as the cluster option, had worked in the past to provide higher density housing developments within residential zoning districts.
- Farmington Hills was projected to lose population, and most of the property is developed. Perhaps missing middle housing is a way to provide infill development.
- There were “pockets” of development areas in the City, where missing middle housing might be a real benefit, especially if developed creatively.

#### Robertson Homes Presentation

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Jim Clarke, Robertson Brothers, gave the background and a concept plan for a development south of 13 Mile Road and west of Inkster. He made the following points:

- Housing needs and types have changed over the last 30 years.
- In terms of developable property in Farmington Hills, there were remaining infill sites, but not much else.
- Robertson Brothers developed quality higher-density housing. The project being discussed this evening was age targeted housing for seniors.
- The project was for 12.99 acres, with 46 proposed detached condominium ranch homes under a PUD development, with average size of 1850 square feet.
- Price points would allow people to sell their larger homes and move into something that was not substantially higher in price.
- The development would provide a buffer from 13 Mile Road to the single family homes to the south.
- This is a creative project that addresses the missing middle and is targeted for seniors. Similar Robertson Homes developments included Brewster Village in Rochester Hills, Mill Ridge in Northville Township, and Villas at Bloomfield Grove, Bloomfield Township.
- Providing new infrastructure required higher density to be economically viable. A PUD would allow houses to be closer to the street and to each other.
- The houses would be of equal or greater value than surrounding residential homes. The residents in the development would not be significant users of City services.

Mr. Clarke concluded that he felt the land being discussed provided a real opportunity for this type of development. When Robertson Brothers had met with Planning staff, staff had suggested they present this concept to the Planning Commission, since this type of development might require a change to the Master Plan.

Planning Commission discussion included:

- Commissioner Orr felt that the increased density of this community would be difficult to justify to the neighbors to the south. Also, a developer could not use the PUD option simply to increase density.
- City Planner Stec said that a development of this type would need to go through the Master Plan process, with the possibility of creating a new zoning district. The Master Plan process would give the community a chance to react and give feedback and would allow the City to listen to its residents.
- Planning Consultant Arroyo suggested that the Commission might want to think about other places where redevelopment of this type might make sense. Going through the Master Plan process could offer study of different locations, existing housing stock, housing trends, and utilize public surveys. One issue was that people who were looking for housing like this – smaller quality homes with low/common maintenance – ended up moving out of the community.
- Commissioner Schwartz was very interested in this type of development, which would appeal to people in his age group; he felt it was not so different from other higher density developments in the City.
- Commissioner Brickner wondered how the single family home in the middle of this proposed development would impact the entire development.
- Chair Stimson pointed out that the Master Plan did show this area as a Special Planning Area, with potentially 37 homes; the concept this evening showed 46 homes. However, the Master Plan was now 11 years old, and it was time to revisit it. He agreed that the southern border would need a significant buffer. While he was open to more discussion regarding this proposal, he also wondered if the cluster option might also result in higher density, without having to create a new zoning district. Perhaps cluster option rules might be changed somewhat to give greater flexibility for this type of development.
- Planning Consultant Arroyo said the highest density under the cluster option was 4.8 du/acre. This proposal would result in 3.5 du/acre. In any event, a higher density development on this site would require a Master Plan amendment.
- Staff Planner Stec also thought the cluster option might be amended, with specific qualification criteria for higher density developments. Again, the Master Plan process was the best way to get community involvement regarding changes of this type.
- Chair Stimson said that if a new zoning district were created, it would need to have special rules regarding borders to RA-1 or RA-2 districts.

City Planner Stec asked the Commission to give some direction to Robertson Brothers in terms of whether the concept provided this evening was worth pursuing. Also, did the Commission want to spend time discussing missing middle housing, and trying to find ways to provide that in Farmington Hills during future Master Plan reviews?

Planning Consultant Arroyo said that he could bring back further information regarding modifying the cluster option. Staff was specifically looking for direction as to whether or not the Commission wanted to study this topic further, with the possibility of making changes to the Master Plan to encourage missing middle housing.

The Commission discussed areas in the City that might benefit from “missing middle” or more dense housing, i.e., the Target shopping center plaza off of Grand River, and the area on the northeast corner of Drake and Grand River. They were open to considering options for higher density attached and detached housing in appropriate locations when conducting the next Master Plan update.

Mr. Clarke pointed out that high density townhomes could be constructed on smaller areas that were close to services such as office buildings, grocery stores and restaurants.

In response to a question from Commissioner Brickner, Mr. Clarke said Robertson Brothers Homes were marketed under Robertson Homes. They were a 75-year-old family-owned and professionally managed development company, constructing 120-180 homes per year.

Chair Stimson closed discussion on this item.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public indicated that they wanted to speak.

### **COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Mantey commented about a new development in the Tempe Arizona area that required its residents not to have cars. The target demographic for that development were the same users of “missing middle housing” being discussed this evening.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on November 19.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION by Orr, support by Brickner, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm.**

Roll call vote:

Yeas:	Brickner, Countegan, Mantey, Orr, Schwartz, Stimson, Trafelet, Turner
Nays:	None
Absent:	None
Abstentions:	None

**MOTION carried 8-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
John Trafelet  
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem