



Annual Report

June 1, 2019 - May 31, 2020

**City of Auburn Hills
Planning Commission**

Under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, the Planning Commission is required to provide an annual report to the City Council. This report is intended to coincide with the City Council's review of the City budget.

This report discusses the following topics:

- Summary of the Commission's operations during the past 12 months
- The status of any on-going planning activities
- Recommendations to the City Council related to planning/development and funding

Commission Operations

The Commission is governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the City's Zoning Ordinance. During the 12 month period starting on June 1, 2019, and ending on May 31, 2020, the Commission's membership was as follows:

Greg Ouellette, Chairperson
 Sam Beidoun, Vice-Chairperson
 Eric Mendieta, Secretary
 Ron Moniz, City Council Liaison (through 12-1-19)
 Brain Marzolf, City Council Liaison (beginning 12-2-19)
 Chauncey Hitchcock
 Laura Ochs
 Carlene Pederson
 Bob Pierce
 Carolyn Shearer

During this time period, the Commission held nine meetings, and 42 recommendations were made to the City Council on development-related items.

Measurable	Y2010 -2011	Y2011 -2012	Y2012 -2013	Y2013 -2014	Y2014 -2015	Y2015 -2016	Y2016 -2017	Y2017 -2018	Y2018 -2019	Y2019 -2020
Meetings	18	11	12	12	11	14	13	11	11	9
Site Plans	6	3	5	12	7	10	17	12	12	10
Special Land Use Permits	12	6	3	6	7	8	11	7	8	9
Tree Removal Permits	4	3	5	6	8	6	7	11	13	9
Planned Unit Developments	0	1	1	3	4	4	5	6	6	4
Rezoning	3	1	8	0	1	3	4	4	5	0
Master Plan Amendments	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Text Amendments	1	1	5	1	2	2	4	1	2	1
Total Projects	26	15	27	28	29	34	62	42	54	42

Note: The Planning Commission regularly scheduled meetings for March, April, and May 2020 were canceled due to the Governors Executive Order – Declaration of State of Emergency (COVID 19).

Professional Planning Support Staff

Steve Cohen, Director of Community Development, provides primary staff support to the Commission. Mr. Cohen has served the Commission since October 4, 1999. He is certified as a professional planner (AICP) with the American Planning Association. He has a Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University.

Shawn Keenan, City Planner, also provides staff support to the Commission. Mr. Keenan has served the Commission since March 15, 2011. He is certified as a professional planner (AICP) with the American Planning Association. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Law & Government and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Eastern Michigan University.

Notable Commission Items

1. Development Applications

Notable projects reviewed by the Commission were the following:

- Webasto Americas Headquarters and Testing Center – A 42,224 square foot building addition.
- Elite Detection K9 - The renovation of the existing 22,760 square foot industrial building located at 2700 Auburn Court into a commercial kennel to specifically breed, raise and train scent-detection Labradors and other working breeds, as well as provide certified K9 teams.
- Michigan State University Federal Credit Union – Is a 50,519 square foot credit union with a drive-through facility.
- Beacon Hill Townhomes (Phase 5) – A multi-family residential development consisting of 65 two-story townhouse-style apartment units in 12 buildings.
- Church of God In Christ – Is a 32,948 square foot church with conference rooms, offices, multipurpose room, meeting rooms, classrooms and a warming kitchen.
- The Avant at Five Points – A 61-unit low-rise multi-family residential development.
- North Squirrel Apartments – A 45-unit multi-family residential development consisting of three two-story apartment buildings.
- Speedway Fueling Station and Convenience Store Rebuild – An automobile fueling station with 16 fueling positions and a 4,608 square foot convenience store.
- Evolution Sportsplex Expansion – Included one 35,650 square foot fieldhouse and one 125,400 air-supported sports dome structure.
- R. Youngblood & Co. – This is a redevelopment project consisting of the construction of a one-story, 4,200 square foot office/warehouse building with associated neatly and methodically arranged storage yard.
- AT&T Wireless Communication Monopole Tower - A 150-foot tall monopole tower, with AT&T Mobile's antennae placed at the 150-foot level, and two additional co-location opportunities provided at the 135-foot and 120-foot levels.

2. Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

- Article IX, B-2, General Business Districts, and Article XII, T&R, Technology & Research Districts – The Ordinance amendment was designed to provide the City Council full control and discretion over the approval of future motel, hotel, and conference center developments, along with the expansion of existing motel, hotel, and conference center developments. The amendment allows hotels where the City Council deems appropriate via the Planned Unit Development Option process with a desire for the developments to either:
 - Provide a value-added aspect such as a conference center, restaurant, or entertainment component; or
 - Be part of a master-planned development like, for example, the redevelopment of the Palace of Auburn Hills property or the land adjacent to Topgolf.

3. Kayak Point Park - MDNR Trust Fund Grant Application (Recreation Commission)

The Recreation Commission recommended approval of the MDNR Trust Fund grant, for the development of Kayak Point Park, in the amount of \$192,600, with a city matching amount of \$128,500 (\$118,000 cash/\$10,500 In-Kind (40% match) for a total estimated project cost of \$321,100.

This conceptual plan for the park includes the following features:

- New access point to the Clinton River for recreational use
- Kayak and canoe launch site with Kayak storage locker
- Riverfront/access for fishing
- Wildlife/river viewing areas
- Pathways and nature trails
- Entrance drive for vehicles from Auburn Road
- Picnic shelter with seating
- River wayfinding and safety signage
- LED and solar site lighting
- Landscaping with native plants/grasses, rock
- Raingardens and bioswales for stormwater filtration
- Easy access from regional trail systems and public transportation

4. Support Staff Training

Steve Cohen and Shawn Keenan attended the *Michigan APA Conference* held in Kalamazoo, on September 25-27, 2019 and have participated in several virtual planning webinars in 2020.

AICP planners, like Mr. Cohen and Mr. Keenan, are required to obtain professional development training in order to maintain their credentials. AICP planners must earn a minimum of 32 CM credits (1 hour = 1 CM credit) within a designated two-year reporting period. A minimum of 1.5 credits must be on the topic of ethics, and another 1.5 credits must be on the topic of current planning law. Mr. Cohen has earned 32.5 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021. Mr. Keenan has earned 36.5 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021.

5. Commission Training

Training is a high priority for the Commission and City Council. Members are faced with an enormous responsibility to help guide the physical development of the community. Poor decisions could lead the City into costly litigation. The Commission has benefited greatly over the years from training, whether they are new members who want to learn about planning or veteran members who need to keep up to date with changes in the law and planning practices.

Members Ouellette, Beidoun, and Moniz attended the *Michigan APA Conference* held in Kalamazoo, on September 25-27, 2019.

The City of Auburn Hills has been involved with a very limited number of development-related lawsuits over the past 20 years, which is mainly attributed to a proactive Commissioner training program and well-trained staff. It is our understanding that this record of accomplishment has helped the City lower its general liability insurance rates over the years, which saves taxpayers money.

6. The City's Woodlands Preservation Ordinance – City's Tree Fund

During this reporting period, no developments were required to make payments into the City's Tree Fund or utilized the alternative provision of Section 34-310(b)(4) in a way in which the City Council believed the highest and best outcome could be achieved.

Planning Commission Terms and Attendance Records

During this reporting time period, the Commission held nine Regularly Scheduled meetings. No Special Meetings were held.

Name	Term Endings	Regular Meetings	Special Meetings
Greg Ouellette	July 2021	9 / 9	0 / 0
Sam Beidoun	July 2020	8 / 9	0 / 0
Eric Mendieta	July 2021	7 / 9	0 / 0
Ron Moniz	Nov. 2019	5 / 5	0 / 0
Brian Marzolf	Nov. 2021	2 / 4	0 / 0
Chauncey Hitchcock	July 2021	7 / 9	0 / 0
Laura Ochs	July 2020	3 / 9 *	0 / 0
Carlene Pederson	July 2022	8 / 9	0 / 0
Bob Pierce	July 2022	7 / 9	0 / 0
Carolyn Shearer	July 2022	8 / 9	0 / 0

** Excused absences due to illness*

On-Going Planning Activities based on the City Council's Y2020 Strategic Goals and Objectives

1. Explore actions identified in the Main Street Oakland County Plan that will further enhance Downtown Auburn Hills
2. Continue to foster the redevelopment of the Palace of Auburn Hills site
3. Continue Downtown Auburn Hills Development and expansion. Encourage vertical development to four stories and support the creation of a public gathering space
4. Continue to foster development along the M-24/Opdyke Road Corridor
5. Make safe pathway connections in underdeveloped areas, where desired by residents
6. Continue to keep Auburn Hills friendly and livable for all ages and abilities

Commission Recommendations to City Council

The Commission respectfully recommends that the City Council ensure that the Y2021 City of Auburn Hills Budget allows for the following items:

1. Continued staff support from Mr. Cohen, Mr. Keenan, and the City's Administrative Development Review Team
2. Funding planning activities (e.g., citizen participation, maps, printing, technical research, Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances updates, etc.)
3. Funding for educational materials and technical training for Commission members