



Annual Report

June 1, 2020 - May 31, 2021

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 ongoing 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, 2020, and ending on May 31, 2021, the Commission's membership was as follows:

Greg Ouellette, Chairperson
 Sam Beidoun, Vice-Chairperson
 Eric Mendieta, Secretary
 Brain Marzolf, City Council Liaison
 Chauncey Hitchcock
 Laura Ochs
 Carlene Pederson
 Bob Pierce
 Carolyn Shearer

During this time period, the Commission held seven virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams, and 14 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	Y2020 -2021
Meetings	18	11	12	12	11	14	13	11	11	9	7
Site Plans	6	3	5	12	7	10	17	12	12	10	3
Special Land Use Permits	12	6	3	6	7	8	11	7	8	9	4
Tree Removal Permits	4	3	5	6	8	6	7	11	13	9	1
Planned Unit Developments	0	1	1	3	4	4	5	6	6	4	3
Rezoning	3	1	8	0	1	3	4	4	5	0	1
Master Plan Amendments	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Text Amendments	1	1	5	1	2	2	4	1	2	1	1
Private Road	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total Projects	26	15	27	28	29	34	62	42	54	42	14

Note: The Planning Commission's regularly scheduled December study session was canceled due to the Governors Executive Order – Declaration of State of Emergency (COVID 19) and the Commission's regularly scheduled meetings in January and May were canceled due to a slowdown in construction.

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:

- **Trailway Commons** – Is a mixed-use development consisting of a 2,500 square foot restaurant with a drive-thru and outside seating, a two-story 13,695 square foot commercial/medical office center, and five, three-story multi-family condominiums consisting of 29-units.
- **Project Worldwide Global Headquarters / George P. Johnson Detroit Headquarters** – Is a new 136,300 square foot light industrial building at the northeast corner of Giddings Road and Taylor Road consisting of 39,600 square feet of office space, 71,700 square feet of light assembly, and 25,000 square feet of warehouse space.
- **Consumers Energy Pontiac Adams City Gate Rebuild** - The proposed rebuild included the removal of all five existing buildings and all other above-ground structures and equipment to make room for the construction and installation of newer and more modern structures, equipment and utilities. The total number of buildings located on-site will be reduced from five to one. The proposed Auburn Hills city gate rebuild project is part of Consumers Energy's larger modernization energy infrastructure project for the South Oakland Macomb network.
- **The Brunswick** - Is a four-story, 29,184 square foot mixed-use building in Downtown Auburn Hills. The proposed building is designed to accommodate a mixture of retail and office space, along with two live-work units on the ground floor, private office space on the second floor, nine apartments on the third floor, and nine apartments on the fourth floor.
- **Clover Senior Housing** – Is a four-story, 124-unit, 135,572 square foot, independent senior living apartment building, located at the northwest corner of Lapeer Road and Taylor Road. The apartment building will consist of six one-bedroom units and 118 two-bedroom units ranging from 600 to 886 square feet in size.

2. Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

- **Article XVIII, General Provisions, Section 1813. Storage of Vehicles, Machinery and Like Items**
The Ordinance amendment was designed to allow:
 - One (1) small commercial vehicle, like a pick-up truck, passenger/cargo-style van, sport utility vehicle, or passenger car with accessories such as a roof-mounted light bar or a roof rack for a ladder or similar equipment to be parked outside of an enclosed building on residential property provided the vehicle is parked on an improved surface in the front, side or rear yard.
 - One (1) commercial business-related or non-recreational equipment use utility trailer to be stored outside of an enclosed building provided the trailer is screened and parked in the side or rear yard.
 - Signage on the “allowed” commercial vehicle and utility trailer, provided the advertising is directly related to the use of the vehicle.

The changes were intended to bring many of the small home-based businesses currently operating with no negative impact on their neighborhood into compliance with the ordinance.

3. Support Staff Training

Steve Cohen and Shawn Keenan attended the *Michigan APA Conference* held virtually on October 7-9, 2020. They also participated in several other virtual planning webinars in 2020 and 2021.

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 56.25 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021. Mr. Keenan has earned 71.50 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021.

4. 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.

Due to the pandemic, no members of the Planning Commission were able to attend the *Michigan APA Conference* held virtually, on October 7-9, 2020.

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.

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

During this reporting period, one development established that the planting of the required replacement trees on-site was not possible and an appropriate off-site location was not available. In this case, the applicant chose to make a payment into the City's Tree Fund and/pr 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.

- Clover Development – The applicant made a payment of \$59,660 into the City's Tree Fund to account for the 157 replacement trees that could not be planted on-site or at alternate locations.

Planning Commission Terms and Attendance Records

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

Name	Term Endings	Regular Meetings	Special Meetings
Greg Ouellette	July 2021	7 / 7	0 / 0
Sam Beidoun	July 2020	7 / 7	0 / 0
Eric Mendieta	July 2021	6 / 7	0 / 0
Brian Marzolf	Nov. 2021	7 / 7	0 / 0
Chauncey Hitchcock	July 2021	6 / 7	0 / 0
Laura Ochs	July 2020	4 / 7 *	0 / 0
Carlene Pederson	July 2022	3 / 7 *	0 / 0
Bob Pierce	July 2022	7 / 7	0 / 0
Carolyn Shearer	July 2022	7 / 7	0 / 0

* Excused absences due to illness

On-Going Planning Activities based on the City Council's Y2022 Strategic Goals & Objectives

1. Continue to foster development along the M-24/Opdyke Road Corridor
2. Focus redevelopment efforts on TIFA, city-owned, and private properties
3. 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 Y2022 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