



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Planning Commission

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Chairperson Deborah Brnabic, Vice Chairperson Greg Hooper
Members: Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick, Marvie Neubauer, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver
Youth Representatives: Janelle Hayes and Siddh Sheth

Tuesday, June 18, 2024

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

In accordance with the provisions of Michigan's Open Meetings Act, Public Act No. 267 of 1976, as amended, notice is hereby given that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission will hold a SPECIAL WORK SESSION on Tuesday, June 18, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the Auditorium at the Rochester Hills Municipal Offices, 1000 Rochester Hills Dr., Rochester Hills, Michigan 48309 to discuss the City's Master Land Use Plan along with the City's consultants Giffels Webster.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Brnabic called the Planning Commission Special Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m., Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

Present 7 - Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Greg Hooper, Marvie Neubauer, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver
Excused 2 - Anthony Gallina and Dale Hetrick

Others Present:

Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary

Mr. Hetrick and Mr. Gallina provided prior notice that they would be unable to attend and were excused.

Chairperson Brnabic welcomed attendees to the Special Work Session.

The Commission discussed the events of last Saturday's mass shooting at the Brooklands Splash Pad in the context of designing safe, welcoming and open public spaces; and it was noted that people should not be ashamed to ask for help or resources. It was mentioned that the DPS Facility on Auburn Road would serve as a Family Assistance Center to provide counseling services to anyone who wished to take advantage of them and speak to someone from Monday through Friday from 4 to 8 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

DISCUSSION

2024-0299 Master Plan 2024

(McLeod Memo dated 6/18/24, Rochester Hills Community Components dated 6/12/24, PC Draft Work Session Minutes of 5/21/24, PC Work Session Minutes of 3/19/24, and PC-CC Joint Minutes of 1/29/24 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record thereof.)

Present in addition to staff were representatives from Giffels Webster, the City's Planning Consultant, Jill Bahm and Ian Hogg.

Ms. Bahm reviewed the five main components of a community that are reviewed in a Master Plan, including Housing, Transportation, Natural Features, Community Health and Economy. Through the presentation, she explained "Planning Filters" and noted that they are ways to measure/assess how policies align with the planning themes discussed previously. She likened them to lenses that people can look through to see how the city is doing in these areas, including the following:

- Age-friendly*
- Sustainability*
- Innovation*

She described Scenario Planning, noting that it is a way of thinking about the long-range future of a community.

- Some methods focus on how to achieve a desirable vision for the future or how to avoid a disaster.*
- Others attempt to forecast multiple futures and prepare for the implications of each.*
- For the long-range planning process in Rochester Hills, staff is focusing on a "preferred" future or long-range vision for the community that will illustrate the way in which community components are inter-connected.*
- This approach will lead to objectives and action strategies that align with the wants and needs of the community today and in the future.*

She explained that based on the 2018 Master Plan, recent data, and community input so far, three scenarios were developed that reflect varied outcomes for the future. She explained the scenarios, and stated that they reflect the balancing of competing interests. She stressed that there is no one "right" answer and there are pros and cons of each. The key idea is to recognize a balanced approach to land use policies associated with a future vision. She reviewed the scenarios:

- Scenario 1 - Tomorrow as Today.*

Components:

** Continued pattern of development. Focus on large single-family homes; no new options for multi-family housing; no significant increase in density. Housing costs continue to rise, with lack of options for young families and seniors to downsize.*

- * Continued reliance on cars encourages auto-oriented businesses, traffic congestion increases, limited public transportation options.*
- * Pressure remains to develop privately held open space; environmental concerns rise. Parks remain a key asset for the community.*
- * Growing isolation and inactivity for some residents due to car dependence. Aging population puts stress on public health facilities.*
- * City remains a desirable place to do business; employers may continue to be concerned about managing quality staff.*

Filters:

- * Reliance on personal automobiles leaves youth and aging residents dependent on others; existing housing options not adaptable for mobility limitations; younger families find it difficult to afford their way of life.*
- * Limited focus on renewable energy or green building practices; lack of investment in innovative stormwater infrastructure.*
- * Limited innovation as the focus is to remain relatively stable.*

- Scenario 2 - Enhancing Connections

Components:

- * Multi-unit housing such as granny flats, duplex, triplex and quadriplex homes permitted in limited areas offering additional housing choices at different price ranges.*
- * Expanded sidewalk network offering more connectivity, pilot "slow" streets, bike sharing and bus service to ease congestion.*
- * New developments incorporate parks, plazas or community gardens.*

Expanded connections to parks.

- * Improved physical and mental health; fostered greater resident interaction; decreased reliance on cars.*
- * Rising overall housing costs will continue, walkable neighborhoods could boost the local economy.*

Filters:

- * Improved pedestrian infrastructure provides safer and easier access for older adults and children. Some difficulties still exist for affordable housing.*
- * Improvements to traffic congestion and air quality; more concentration could put a strain on resources.*
- * Fosters a walkable mixed-use environment attracting innovative businesses. May encounter some resistance from residents who prefer traditional environments.*

- Scenario 3 - Rochester Hills Reimagined

Components:

- * Diverse housing mix options; increase in number of housing options providing more affordable options for young families; seniors can downsize and find housing.*
- * Robust public transportation; complete sidewalk network; reduced reliance on cars; abundant EV infrastructure.*
- * Protected green spaces, sustainable design and connectivity, emphasis on designing with nature.*
- * Increased physical activity, greater access to resources and amenities, higher population density to foster a vibrant community.*
- * City remains a desirable place to do business.*

Filters:

** Diverse housing adapted for different mobility levels. Improved connectivity and social interaction.*

** Increased focus on energy efficiency and renewable resources; reduced reliance on personal vehicles; residents willing to pay for renewal and green projects.*

** Rochester Hills leads by example.*

Ms. Bahm reviewed current and historical building permit data, median sales prices and homeowner vacancy rates:

- Primarily single family residential with some multi-family.*
- Increase in one, two and four bedroom, decrease in five bedroom homes; household sizes may be shrinking.*

She noted housing wants and factors based on the data and from community feedback:

- Stable property values; stable neighborhoods, peace and quiet, access to parks and recreation, and safety.*
- Needs include addressing empty nesters, housing variety, affordability, young families and first time buyers, and welcoming newcomers.*
- Outside factors include Michigan tax laws and housing incentives, school enrollment, aging population and the population rate, economic conditions, public health and construction costs.*
- Internal factors include community pressure, available land, and zoning and land policy.*

She reviewed transportation data collected, noting that there is a significant increase in the number of people who are working from home. She noted transportation wants, needs and factors:

- Wants included walkability, reduced congestion and safety.*
- Needs included sidewalks, pedestrian crossings and alternatives to driving.*
- Outside factors include SMART, RCOC and MDOT.*
- Internal factors are based on financial resources.*

The group discussed the new transportation routes, and mentioned alternatives for biking or walking short errands. E-bikes were briefly discussed and their opportunity to start replacing car trips at some point. Connectivity was stressed in the discussions as some of the sidewalks are not complete. The prevalence of delivery trucks was mentioned. Those with health issues that can no longer drive were also mentioned.

Ms. Bahm reviewed data regarding natural features, noting statistics for open space, water, impervious coverage and the tree canopy. The data also included changes in precipitation and temperature in southeast lower Michigan over time. She reviewed wants and needs:

- Wants include preservation of the area's natural features along with access for the public to enjoy.*
- Needs include improvements to infrastructure and open space, along with access to public spaces including sidewalks, paths and trails.*
- Outside factors include climate change, State and Federal laws.*
- Internal factors include financial resources and property rights.*

Discussion ensued regarding comments regarding the lack of investment in innovative stormwater infrastructure and struggles to handle the increase in the number and intensity of extreme weather events.

Ms. Bahm noted comments received from homeowner's association groups that they wanted to transfer ownership of stormwater facilities back to the City because they had issues maintaining them.

Mr. McLeod noted that the ponds are getting to the age where they need costly maintenance and are not functioning the way they should. He mentioned that the City has not really pushed to have innovative storm water management. He commented that the City has had standardized storm water improvements all over the board, but has not really gone and pushed a developer to do bioswales, rain gardens, and rain barrels. He added that the Master Plan can push to require or incentivize within the developments or even within the City's own practices.

Chairperson Brnabic commented that it is a developer's decision and a directive cannot be issued due to costs.

Mr. McLeod commented that when the tree canopy percentage was increased, there was pushback at first, but it was done because it was important and the right thing to do. He stated that anything that will require more cost from a developer will receive pushback, and it will become a policy decision.

Mr. Struzik commented that there are some neighborhoods that see significant flooding, and he mentioned that his is one of the neighborhoods looking for a solution. He mentioned that they do not have a functioning homeowner's association, and have a property owner's association that is dominated by the interests of the larger property owners and apartment complex owners; so they are stuck without a solution.

Mr. McLeod stated that this is where preventative maintenance helps as things are not put off until they become a large price tag item. He suggested that there are different levels of improvements that could be required, from rain barrels to handle flash storms to redesigning an entire storm system for a drainage district.

Chairperson Brnabic asked what the City's design requirement is currently as years ago it was only required to have a 25-year storm model.

Mr. McLeod responded that the technical term is a modified 100-year storm; and he explained that the region has adopted somewhat of a uniform stormwater code, which tries to bring together best practices in terms of how much water is being collected. He commented that Jason Boughton of DPS could weigh in on the requirements; and when consulted, Mr. Boughton said not much has changed with the City's standards. He noted that it is based on the size and coefficient of runoff for the site, and developers must show their calculations. He added that there is a quantity equation and a quality equation for treating the water. Mr. McLeod mentioned that the City's directive can be pushed in the Master Plan if it is something that the Planning Commission wants to do.

It was noted that soil conditions vary across the city, from sand in some areas that can accommodate rain gardens to hard clay in other areas. It was mentioned that a blanket requirement would be very hard to come up with. The question was raised as to how to increase the minimum requirement and offer incentives for developers to do more.

Ms. Bahm moved on to Community Health statistics, and reviewed data on population age ranges. She noted the wants and needs relative to the topic:

- Wants include housing and transportation for older residents, and walkability.*
- Needs include housing and transportation for older residents, improved walkability, and access to community facilities, goods services and health care.*
- Outside factors included the aging population, Michigan's population rate, any economic downturn, and the public health pandemic.*
- Internal factors include financial resources.*

Economic impacts were reviewed, with data including household income, poverty levels, employment, daytime population rates, and vacancy rates for industrial, office and retail over the years. She reviewed wants and needs relative to the economy:

- Wants include housing for employees involved in local businesses; financial resources to maintain and improve community facilities and infrastructure; and maintaining property values.*
- Needs include housing and financial resources.*
- Outside factors include the economic conditions in the region, state and the US, State and Federal regulations, and technological changes.*
- Internal factors include local regulations, and the desirability of the city with its attractive, well-run community facilities.*

It was noted that time was up and the Commissioners would be taking a break before their regular meeting.

Final thoughts included a discussion of the events of the past weekend and a need to address the City's communication infrastructure relative to those who are homebound or are not on the internet or Facebook during another emergency, natural disaster, or health emergency. It was suggested that a City program match up vulnerable people with people who are nearby and can help provide support.

Discussed

ADJOURNMENT

There was a motion by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, to adjourn the Special Work Session at 6:50 p.m. The Planning Commission would reconvene for the Regular Meeting after a short break.

*Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission*

Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary