



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, July 16, 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, July 16, 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 9 - Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Greg Hooper, Marvie Neubauer, Dale Hetrick, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver

Others Present:

Sara Roediger, Planning and Economic Development Director
Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary

Mr. Hetrick arrived at 6:10 p.m.

Chairperson Brnabic welcomed attendees to the Special Work Session.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

DISCUSSION

[2024-0344](#) Master Plan 2024

(McLeod Memo dated 7/10/24, Rochester Hills Community Components dated 6/12/24, PC Draft Work Session Minutes of 6/18/24, PC 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, Julia Upfal and Ian Hogg.

Ms. Bahm stated that this will be a continuation of last month's discussion relative to different components of the community and the things that will be focused on in this Master Plan. She mentioned the components of housing, transportation, natural features, community health and the economy, looking through the filters, thinking about how policies and strategies can be age-friendly, promote sustainability and reflect innovation in the planning process. She stated that they started to talk about scenario planning, with a recognition that all things have to be thought of in a balanced approach and cannot necessarily go all one way or the other. She commented that needs will have to have certain strategies that go along with them; and people may or may not like all of those things. She stressed that keeping the overall goals and ideas in mind is helpful in using scenario planning for this planning process. She commented that often scenario planning is for the purpose of avoiding something. In this instance, however, it can be used to think about multiple future scenarios and implications of each, deciding which scenario is where the City's vision lies, and determining the steps to get there. She likened it to thinking about the preferred future.

She stated that based on the Master Plan and data from the community, three scenarios were developed that reflect varied outcomes for the future, and presented the balancing of competing interests that are associated with making changes to those community components of housing, transportation and community health. She noted that there is no right answer, and they would be talking through the pros and cons of each and whether there are opportunities to blend some things together. She stressed that they will look at the current wants and needs of those who are here today along with the people who are not here yet to plan for the future and arrive at a balanced approach.

She explained that the attendees would be broken into smaller groups and would then reconvene to share their discussion. She briefly reviewed the three scenarios, Tomorrow as Today, Enhancing Connections, and Rochester Hills Reimagined, and provided printouts and slide packets to the groups. She asked the groups to spend 10 to 15 minutes on each scenario and noted that the whole group would reconvene around 6:25 p.m.

(Mr. Hetrick arrived at 6:10 p.m.)

Upon reconvening at 6:27 p.m., Ms. Bahm asked each group to review their discussion.

Mr. Struzik stated that for Scenario #1, Tomorrow as Today, many people are happy with this scenario and will defend it. He noted that some people are open to changing things.

Ms. Denstaedt noted that they used that scenario as a baseline and used bits and pieces of the other scenarios to fit into it.

For Scenario #2, Ms. Denstaedt stated that their discussion group did not like anything in it. She noted that their discussion was more about the housing types, and their group wanted to stick with single family. She stated that looking at ranches, they can be helpful for both the demographics of new homeowners and for seniors looking to stay within the community.

Ms. Neubauer noted that their group discussed transportation options. She pointed out that it was on the ballot and nobody wanted it. Oakland County brought it in, and her understanding is that the bus system has not yet been greatly utilized in Rochester Hills. She commented that multi-unit housing is not something that people are excited about, and she pointed out that the Ordinance was amended last year to avoid tall buildings. She stated that they discussed staying with the scenario of one type of housing, but changing the housing to single family. She commented that instead of building a 6,000 square foot house in developments similar to the new houses on Butler, it could become a requirement that a certain percentage would have to be ranch-style homes on single levels.

Mr. Struzik stated that for Scenario #2, his group did not discuss the busing situation. He stated that as a former commuting bus rider, a big obstacle to living in Rochester Hills is that you have to have a car, and now there is another option. He commented that other issues affecting transportation are frequency and reliability, and he noted that right now the bus runs about once an hour and it has to entice a rider who has the ability to drive.

Ms. Roediger noted that she had busing statistics for the second quarter, and the number of people that got on or off in Rochester Hills or Rochester was 9,360, which is more than was expected. She added that SMART indicated that it usually takes 18 months to get up to what the ridership numbers will be.

It was noted that the population of Rochester Hills and Rochester is 90,000 and 11,000 respectively.

Mr. Struzik stated that they need to provide opportunities for people to transition from car to bus, such as parking their car in a sanctioned place to assure the driver that their car will be fine and not be towed from private property. He added that weather is a factor in ridership as this area has harsh winters. He noted that they discussed the idea of bike sharing and stated that the group did not think there would be enough density for sharing to be successful as most people will have their own bikes. He stated that they discussed that ultimately the idea would be to reduce car trips but not necessarily car dependency; and perhaps they can convert some of the trips over the year into walking or bike trips.

He stated that their group discussed that there was not a lot of opportunity in the city left to redevelop things as there would not be many large spaces. He mentioned as a part of Scenario #2 that perhaps there was an opportunity to develop some sort of a trolley system to connect the four quadrants of the city on a regular basis.

Ms. Denstaedt stated that their group took a lot of things from Scenario #3 and

put them into Scenario #1. She commented that some of the bigger cities that utilize bike shares find that many of the bikes are not put away as they should be and bikes are left laying on the ground. She noted that they discussed diversity in home ownership and how to bring in more ranch-style and other single family homes into the community. She added that they discussed opportunities for parks, keeping that aspect and moving it into Scenario #1.

Ms. Neubauer stated that their group did not like the duplex, triplex or quadplex idea. She noted that the increase in non-homestead taxes will drive up costs because the property taxes will be higher for rental properties and that would be counterproductive to keep housing costs low. She stated that she did not think that people want the higher density type of housing in Rochester Hills and still want to keep single family homes. She stressed that houses that are ranches will help, and commented that \$500,000 is not a starter house.

Ms. Upfal asked if there was much demand for multi-generational households.

Ms. Neubauer responded that she does work for probate, and commented that often while the kids want their parents to live with them, the parents want to keep their independence. She added that most of the housing that currently exists is four bedrooms homes where parents would have the ability to come live with their offspring.

Ms. Roediger mentioned that a lot of the developments that have been recently approved are single level, and those like Brewster Village are being sold in the \$600,000s or \$700,000s, and they will not help.

Ms. Neubauer stated that the demand is so high that people are willing to go over asking price. She commented that if there is more housing of this nature available, the demand won't be so high for it. She noted that having a condo is different than having a single family home, as the association fees are often more than they would pay someone to come do the grass every week.

Ms. Roediger stated that except for the Clear Creek Subdivision, they have not had a subdivision residential plat development approved in the City in 30 years; and every neighborhood is a condominium in some form.

Ms. Bahm stated that they are called site condos and still have a common element association where fees are associated. She commented that one of the changes being discussed at the State level in the Legislature is relative to making plats easier so housing can become more affordable.

Mr. Hooper commented that for site condos, they act like a single family home and people cut their own grass. He stated that the reason 99 percent of the people came here is that they wanted a single family safe community. He noted that good schools create the commercial, business, and restaurant areas, and that is why everyone is here. He stated that the scenario suggests that existing single family residential neighborhoods are maintained with the additional granny-flats, duplex, triplex or quad, and he stated that this will not happen.

Ms. Bahm asked about accessory dwellings.

Mr. Hooper responded that people do not want increased density, and it will require more impervious area at the back of a home to add those dwellings.

Ms. Roediger mentioned she would picture someone living over a loft garage, and stated that right now the Ordinances will not allow that.

Mr. Hooper noted that those dwellings will require unwanted stairs.

Ms. Neubauer noted that this would change things into a rental property, and if people want that they will move into Royal Oak or Ferndale where those types of housing are available.

Mr. Hetrick commented that everyone has talked about the need for senior housing to age in place; and if the Master Plan is unwilling to deal with that concept, it is wrong. He stated that it seems that the idea of ranches or duplexes is getting shoved to the side in favor of status quo.

Chairperson Brnabic stated that for years they have had conversations about building ranches, and developers always want two story. She commented that developers are always pushing for higher density because of the higher profits. She pointed out that Jim Polyzois had the vision for that demand and built ranch-style units and they are sold out. She concurred that if more were offered, the price may not be so high. She asked how to determine where to put these developments.

Mr. Struzik stated that there are a few different options for granny-flats. He stated that he is a little more open to the idea, but noted that his neighborhood would not be conducive to it as they do not have the deep lots that would allow an ADU or a granny-flat.

Ms. Bahm asked whether it should be explored if an older resident might wish to move into the smaller unit and rent out the large home.

Mr. Struzik stated that he did not necessarily have an issue with that; however, it might lead to increased density that people do not want. He noted that it could promote a cluttered look building a small home behind an existing house or adding to the top of a garage with a staircase. He noted that their group briefly discussed duplex, triplex or quad, and had some of the same conclusions in the existing neighborhoods. He noted one neighborhood along John R south of School Road where there are a number of duplexes or a mixture of single family and duplexes and stated that he would be open to that. He stated that his group did not necessarily want to see it in an existing neighborhood that had an established characteristic and type.

Ms. Bahm suggested that they think about revising their scenario, and asked about what things in this scenario that the groups liked.

Ms. Denstaedt responded that it was connectivity and parks.

Ms. Neubauer suggested improving infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists

to make it easier to reach destinations, provide a sense of belonging, and support parks and open spaces. She noted that their group crossed out the part about duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes.

Ms. Roediger noted that there are quite a few examples of newly-built duplexes and attached units, and noted that these can make the development a bit more affordable than a standalone single family.

Ms. Neubauer commented that in order to get affordability in housing, higher density is required. She pointed out that while they have gotten feedback that there is a lack of affordable housing in Rochester Hills, no one expects there to be as they do not want the density. She mentioned the Legacy development, noting that people are unhappy about what it looks like in that small area, yet they are almost sold out.

Mr. Struzik mentioned Walton Oaks, and pointed out that people buying into the adjacent neighborhood knew that there was a stub road there. He commented that if that stub road had been opened up, people would not have been happy. He stated that if that had been a development of similar single family homes, they should have looked at using the stub road and not having access off of the main road. He noted that it would have been an opportunity to make it a connected neighborhood. He added that another community off of John R has access to the adjacent neighborhood but with the addition of a fire gate, as the neighbors did not want them connecting through their neighborhood. He mentioned that the Planning Commission considered whether to extend the sidewalk to Gravel Ridge. He stated that in the future, the Commission should actually look toward building these connections. He commented that just because the neighborhoods were developed at different times, does not mean that they have to become islands that come off of main roads.

Ms. Roediger mentioned that Dr. Bowyer initially ran for Council after she was unhappy with Cumberland connecting through to Livernois. She recalled that after Dr. Bowyer joined Council, she understood why this was done to connect neighbor to neighbor.

Ms. Neubauer commented that she does not think people would be as opposed to the connection for the sake of walkability and a path.

Mr. Hetrick commented that the one thing that has been consistent during public input is connectivity; yet when they have the opportunity to do it, no one wants it in their backyard.

Chairperson Brnabic mentioned that for Gravel Ridge, a lot of traffic would have come through there from John R as a cut-through. She noted that the sidewalk only went so far and there were questions of who would maintain it.

Mr. Struzik responded that there is a tremendous amount of foot traffic on Gravel Ridge going to the church.

Mr. Hooper commented that he thinks that duplexes are a good idea.

Ms. Neubauer stated that if she had to choose between duplexes, triplexes or quads, she would choose duplexes. She mentioned quadplexes in Rochester that are owned by landlords and are all falling apart for lack of maintenance.

Ms. Bahm stated that this is another reason that more housing is needed because there is insufficient housing. She mentioned that she was in Lansing attending a small forum of legislators hosted by the American Planning Association and the Michigan Association of Planning, discussing housing in Michigan and the different approaches communities are taking. She stated that one of the things that they talked about was that there is so much bad housing. She commented that the population is not growing dramatically, but the households are growing and there is a need for more housing units.

She noted that the group needed to wrap up to move on to the Regular meeting, and stated that they would develop a scenario based on the feedback. She stated that she thought they might want to meet one more time before moving on to a joint meeting, and commented that she thinks it might be helpful to pull data on housing forecasts and population age. She mentioned a statistic that it costs \$96,000 to build any new housing unit, which is part of the affordability problem. She noted that people are suspicious of home builders because they say that their housing will be affordable. She commented that there must be a balance of affordable housing versus the developer's right to make a profit.

Ms. Neubauer commented that developers initially mention a price range; and when the houses are listed, they are three or four times as much.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a motion by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, to adjourn the Special Work Session at 6:55 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