

**City of Rochester Hills
Department of Planning**

STAFF REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION

February 4, 2005

Rochester College Preliminary PUD Review	
APPLICANT	Rochester College 800 W. Avon Rochester Hills, MI 48307
LOCATION	North side of Avon Road between Livernois and Rochester Road
SIDWELL	Various
FILE NO.	94-426
ZONING	SP, Special Purpose
STAFF	Derek Delacourt, Planner
REQUEST	Preliminary PUD Review

SUMMARY

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) process is being proposed for Rochester College as a resolution to multiple issues related to the proposed future development of the College. Rochester College is a fixture in the City of Rochester Hills and, as it always has been, remains one of the City's most unique and challenging sites for development. The City's Planning Commission and the College have attempted to identify and utilize a process to review the proposed future development of the campus for many years. The identification of and resolution to several issues related to that development have created roadblocks to that goal. Two of the major issues preventing review of the College's Master Plan have been the existing Historic Parcel that is a part of the College property and the environmental issues related to the site. Recently, based on meetings between the College, City Staff, the City's Historic Districts Study Committee (HDSC), and the City Council, the PUD process was identified as a potential tool to resolve those issues and afford the City and the College the opportunity to identify a plan for future development that benefits all of the parties involved.

The use of the PUD process provides benefits to both the City and the College. It allows the overall review of the College's proposed Master Plan by the City's Planning Commission as opposed to the piecemeal approach that has been utilized to this point. It allows for resolution to the issue regarding the size and protection of the Historic District. It permits flexibility in dimensional standards to allow the City and the College to determine the best possible future development plans for the campus.

As part of the discussion related to resolving the issues of the College, the idea of using the PUD was presented to the City Council. In response, the City Council passed the following motion:

“Rochester Hills City Council supports the identified solution and directs Staff, the Historic Districts Study Committee, the Planning Commission and Rochester College to move forward with a good faith effort to negotiate a Planned Unit Development Agreement to meet all of the goals and objectives of all the parties.”

The Preliminary PUD submittal reflects the results of that effort.

PRELIMINARY PUD PROCESS

The intent of the Preliminary PUD process is for the Planning Commission and City Council to make a determination regarding the ability of the applicant to utilize the PUD process outlined in the Ordinance. If that is accomplished and the determination made that the use of the process is appropriate, then the City and College will move forward to negotiate a Final PUD Agreement and Plan for the future development of the site. To move forward with the process, the Planning Commission would recommend use of the process to the City Council and identify any key issues related to the Agreement and/or Plans that should be addressed prior to Final Approval.

The following section of the Ordinance identifies the Intent of the City’s PUD process:

Sec. 138-1001. Intent.

- (a) The PUD district is intended to allow flexibility in design and permit variation of the specific bulk, area, road and utility design standards to:
 - (1) Encourage innovation and variety in design, layout, and type of structures;
 - (2) Preserve significant natural features and open space;
 - (3) Promote efficient use of public services and utilities and/or upgrade such facilities;
 - (4) Minimize adverse traffic impacts;
 - (5) Encourage development of sites when the uniform regulations of other zoning districts do not provide adequate safeguards for the site or its surrounding areas; and
 - (6) Encourage the appropriate redevelopment or reuse of historic sites and districts or parcels occupied by old or obsolete non-residential uses.

Utilizing the PUD process in relation to the College has the potential to accomplish all of the above criteria. By working with the College now to identify their proposed future development the process may allow the flexibility to improve the design and layout of structures, preserve additional open space, and protect natural features. The ability to review the entire site allows the City and College to plan for current and future public service and utility needs, to review the overall internal road layout and connections to public roads. Also, it allows the City to require dedication of future right-of-way now. Use of the process permits enough flexibility to allow the College to increase development in other areas of the site and preserve a portion of the Historic District and maintain the associated historic structures.

The specific action requested for consideration by the Planning Commission is a recommendation to City Council relative to whether or not the site and conceptual plan generally qualify for PUD rezoning and, if so, what key issues must be addressed prior to final PUD approval.

KEY ISSUES

As part of the preliminary review, the applicant's conceptual plan and draft PUD Agreement have been reviewed by applicable City departments and Staff. Other than the issue identified below, no major issues were identified with the design of the site that are not able to be resolved through the final review process.

HISTORIC DISTRICT

Approximately 40 acres of the College's site is a designated local Historic District. The limited size of the College's property, the topography restrictions, and the size of the district, limits the amount of buildable area available for future expansion. In an attempt to increase available area for expansion, the College made a request to the City to delist the district. This would permit structures associated with the district to be removed for future development. The City Council requested the HDSC to study the request and make a recommendation to Council regarding the historic value of the site. The Study Committee recommended to Council that the district does meet the criteria for designation and should remain a district.

The PUD assists in resolving this issue by allowing additional development space, (i.e., increased height, reduction of setbacks and other flexibility) which would not currently be allowed by the City's Zoning Ordinance. Included in the Preliminary PUD exhibits are plans demonstrating the size of the proposed modified district. The College's proposed Master Plan Exhibits include the modified district, and the text of the Agreement identifies the conditions of the proposed future development around the district, including the relocation of the farmhouse onto the district and the agreement that no future structures will be built within 150 feet of the proposed district.

TOPOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL

The College property is extremely limited in area available for future expansion by the extreme topography on portions of the site, the presence of floodplain and regulated wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive areas of the site.

The PUD provides the ability to relax some of the normal dimensional requirements of the Ordinance allowing increased developable area and at the same time it permits the City to add additional protection and design standards. The PUD proposes to allow buildings on the Campus to reach a maximum of seven stories in height. The City's Ordinance restricts buildings in SP zoned districts to two stories in height, with the exception that under certain circumstances the Planning Commission may approve building heights of up to five stories for some buildings and up to eight stories for hospitals. The PUD allows the City to review the height requirements for the site as a whole and to make a determination, if the proposed height is acceptable, for all future development of the College. Allowing increased height reduces the size of building footprints and lessens the effect of proposed buildings on the topography. Also, the PUD allows a relaxation of the setback requirements. This permits the most flexibility in sighting of future buildings to help avoid the more environmentally sensitive areas of the site.

CONDITIONAL LAND USE APPROVAL

The Special Purpose zoning district allows the College use subject to a Conditional Land Use (CLU) approval by City Council. This requires the College and the City to review each proposed phase of development to ensure that it meets the applicable conditions for CLU. Utilization of the PUD would allow the Planning Commission and Council to review the College's entire Master Plan and determine if all future proposed development of the site meets the conditions of CLU. If approved, it removes that additional layer of review and approval for each phase streamlining the process for both the College and the City.

MASTER PLAN

The College and the Planning Commission, at several meetings over several years, have discussed the possibility of reviewing a Master Plan for the College. The intent being to have an opportunity to review not only individual phases or projects but to work together to identify a plan that meets the future development needs of the College. Finalization of the Master Plan would take place prior to Final PUD approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above referenced reasons, the proposed project meets the required conditions and standards for use of the PUD process. If the Planning Commission and City Council agree that the proposed use of the PUD process is appropriate for the subject site, Staff recommends the following motions in reference to City File # 94-426:

POTENTIAL MOTION

MOTION by _____, seconded by _____, in the matter of City File No. 94-426 (Rochester College), the Planning Commission **recommends** that City Council **support** use of the PUD process with the following findings and in consideration of the following key issues that need be addressed in the final PUD submittal.

Findings:

1. The proposed project meets the standards for use of the Planned Unit Development process.
2. The applicant has met all of the requirements of the Preliminary Planned Unit Development Submittal.

Key Issues:

1. Approval of proposed height modification for proposed campus buildings.
2. Agreement on modified historic district, relocation of the farmhouse, and any permitted uses for the site.
3. Relaxation of setback requirements to allow for flexibility of building location.
4. Proposed wetland fill areas, natural feature setback modification (temporary and permanent), and any required mitigation.
5. Location of proposed conservation easement.
6. Overall internal traffic circulation, pedestrian design, and connection to public roads.
7. Conditional Land Use Approval as part of PUD approval.

8. Final Site Plan approval process for individual phases.
9. Proposed PUD text and any additional language changes.
10. Modification of the City's PUD Ordinance to allow Special Purpose underlying zoning.

References: Rochester College Preliminary PUD submittal with Master Plan and Associated Exhibits
