

## NEW BUSINESS

### 2022-0421

Public Hearing and Request for Rezoning Recommendation - File No. JNRNB2022-0010 - An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 138, Zoning, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Rochester Hills to rezone approximately 4.7 acres of land, part of Parcel No. 15-27-477-073, for the Serra Ford auto dealership property located at 2890 S. Rochester Rd., northwest of the intersection of Rochester and Auburn roads, from B-2 General Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay to B-3 Shopping Center Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay, Joseph Serra, Serra Works of Rochester Hills, LLC, Applicant

*(Staff Reports for the Rezoning and Site Plan dated 9-20-22, Applicant's letter, survey, reviewed plans, floor plans and elevations, WRC Review Letter dated 4-5-22 and Public Hearing and Tree Removal Permit notices had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record thereof).*

*Present for the applicant were Joseph Serra, Serra Automotive and Serra Works of Rochester Hills, Alan Bloom, Joshua Bloom and Vic Habersmith of Bloom General Contracting, Paul Tulikangas, NFE Engineering, and Shane Burley and Adam Coppersmith, Studio Detroit Architects, Pat Parker, General Counsel and Kevin Cassidy, business partner to Mr. Serra.*

*Chairperson Brnabic introduced this item and noted that it is a proposed Ordinance amendment to rezone approximately 4.7 acres of land for the Serra Ford auto dealership property located at 2890 S. Rochester Road from B-2 General Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay to B-3 General Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business overlay. She asked the applicants to come up to the presenters' table.*

*Mr. Serra introduced his team in attendance with him this evening. He noted that Mr. Cassidy is his business partner in Rochester Hills and lives in the community. He explained that they purchased the Ford dealership just over three years ago and have enjoyed being in the community. He added that they recently purchased another dealership that Mr. Cassidy is a part of. He noted that Mr. Cassidy would be able to answer any questions regarding operations.*

*Ms. Roediger explained that this is a two-fold request, with the first being the rezoning, noting that as a part of the redevelopment Serra has been acquiring some parcels including the old Rochester Lawn Service and Enterprise Car Rental. The existing dealership on the north part of the property is zoned B-3, with the FB-3 overlay across the entire parcel with the exception of the residential portion all the way to the west. She explained that all of the parcels have been combined into one parcel and the intent is to rezone the entire parcel into one consolidated zoning with the exception of the westernmost residential portion which will remain residential and remain natural. She noted that it is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and consistent with the general commercial feeling of that entire corridor and intersection.*

*She explained that they are looking to demolish the existing facilities and create a new 61,000 square foot technical center with an all-encompassing showroom, offices and service building. As a part of that, they plan to do some much needed access management improvements on Auburn Road, consolidating a number of driveways to one, and getting rid of the northernmost driveway on Rochester Road to enhance traffic flow on the route. As part of a dealership, it is common to ask for modification to the parking spaces. She explained that the City's ordinance does not differentiate between parking spaces and outdoor sales spaces, and many of the spaces will be occupied by cars looking to be purchased. She stated that this is a modification that has been granted for all of the dealerships as well as some right-of-way plantings. She noted that the City is very ambitious in its landscaping within the right-of-way; however, there are lots of competing needs for that strip of land including utility easements both above and underground which sometimes cause some competing interests along Rochester Road. She commented that she believes they have done a commendable job of proposing what could go there and also beefing up plantings in other areas especially the parcel to the west which is a natural area where they will be enhancing plantings. She stated that Staff recommends approval of the rezoning and site plans.*

*Mr. Tulikangas stated that he is the civil engineer on the project and would provide a quick overview of the site improvements. He noted that there is a proposed lot combination to combine five existing parcels into one split-zoned parcel. He commented that there are two buildings that will be taken down along Rochester Road and four smaller buildings including a couple of sheds to be taken down along Auburn Road, all of which will be replaced with a single building. He stated that they are reconfiguring the parking area to provide 130 customer spaces including bringing all of the ADA components up to current standards; the rest of the parking spaces shown on the plan will be for inventory parking for the dealership. He noted that there are three existing approaches along Rochester Road and they worked with the City and MDOT and the existing northerly approach will be removed. The two other approaches on Rochester Road will be reconstructed and the pathway reconfigured and everything made ADA compliant. Along the south Auburn Road frontage for the site there will be one single approach that will be aligned with the property on the south side of Auburn Road, as that was an MDOT comment received.*

*He explained that in terms of site utilities they will be running new watermain through the site to service the building, making connection at the north side of the site and then connecting again at the south side so it will be a full complete watermain loop with hydrant coverage. In terms of stormwater detention, everything will be brought up to the current Rochester Hills standards and three underground detention systems will cover three distinctive drainage areas and provide treatment for those on an individual basis.*

*Mr. Burley noted that the building is roughly 61,000 square feet. He explained that the floor design is a prototypical design from a Ford branding standpoint. He pointed out that some of the design elements are the giant curved ACM brand wall spanning across, and an icon tower. With regard to the floor plan, they have the capacity to do roughly 40 service bays and five in-house detailing stations as well as a 9- to 12-car service reception. He stated that they are planning for future growth and especially with Ford coming out with electric vehicles there will be a demand for electric vehicle chargers which they will have plenty on site. The front elevation will have a lot of glass, an aluminum composite material, which will look nicely detailed with grout and reveals. Corrugated metal panels will soften the look. He noted there will be a white roof and lots of trees and they are looking at environmentally-friendly design options they can include in the glass to cut down on the solar heat gain as well as LED lighting throughout and in the parking lot. He added that they have discussed including occupancy sensors on the parking lot lights so at night they can dim down and if someone approaches at night they can go back up. He stated that they are trying to be good neighbors and respect the light pollution that can occur on these busy roads.*

*He discussed phasing, noting that the existing building will remain in operation and the new structure behind will be built. Once the new structure is open they will remove the existing dealership.*

*Chairperson Brnabic asked if they plan to sell used cars also.*

*Mr. Burley responded they will.*

*Chairperson Brnabic stated that she is slightly awed at the number of parking spaces requested, realizing that they have a big operation. She questioned whether they plan to use this location for a lot of inventory that might be used or transferred to other dealerships.*

*Mr. Serra responded that all of the inventory seen and planned for is for this operation only; he commented that it is a tribute to the community that this is a top-20 Ford store in the entire United States. He stated that it will be probably top-10 when they complete the facility to meet the standards that their clients and associates deserve. He mentioned that since Mr. Cassidy took it over he has doubled or tripled the used vehicle volume. He added that they also have customer parking for service needed. He commented that quite frankly they could use even more space.*

*Chairperson Brnabic stated that what is being requested is more parking spaces than any other dealership in the city.*

*Mr. Serra responded that in the short time since Mr. Cassidy took over they are number one in the area in used cars and their retail volume might already be the largest in the area.*

*Dr. Bowyer stated that the building looks beautiful and commented that she buys her cars at Serra Ford as they are a Ford family. She noted that the height is like a two-story building but is only one story high.*

*Mr. Burley responded that the top of the arched element brand wall is approximately 30 feet and the showrooms are usually 20 to 22 foot clearance inside so it is a two-story volume. He explained that within the middle portion there is usually a second floor that houses the administrative and some employee functions and offices. He commented that they are efficient with their structure.*

*Dr. Bowyer commented that it looks like there are bays on every side so it looks like they will have a busy back, busy north side and busy south side. She noted that it is to the west side of the property and noted that there are residents are on that side. She asked if there will be extra plantings there to buffer from the residents.*

*Mr. Burley responded that there will plantings, and noted that from the back of the building to the property line is 100 feet. He commented that there is a good-sized buffer there and it is not backed right up to the residential neighborhood.*

*Mr. Tulikangas added that there are healthy trees in that location that will be supplemented.*

*Mr. Serra stated that the main shop itself will be air conditioned so the doors can stay closed. He noted that normally the shops are not air conditioned; and he stated that the decision was made in their initial planning that will make it a quieter location. He commented that he understands the importance of being a great neighbor.*

*Mr. Tulikangas added that there are only two openings from the shop to the back side.*

*Dr. Bowyer stated that she loves that all the trees have been placed in the parking lot; she mentioned that trees might lead to a lot of cleanup on the cars and wanted to make sure that they did not want to take the trees down in the future.*

*Mr. Burley responded that it is the proper selection of the right species, keeping them small and choosing plantings with no berries. He stated that he thinks it is important and the landscape architect has done a good job and is very cognizant over what type of facility this is.*

*Dr. Bowyer commented that she is glad that they are getting rid of the older tired-looking buildings. She questioned whether the used cars will be kept separate from the new cars in the facility.*

*One of the team members in the audience responded that they will be housed in the same location toward the front.*

*Mr. Hooper commented that he and his wife have purchased a dozen vehicles from Huntington Ford, now Serra Ford over the years, however, he would not see this as a conflict of interest. He noted that he read in the paper regarding Jim Farley requiring Ford dealerships to have an electric charging ultimate dealership membership, and he asked whether they could expound on this idea.*

*Mr. Serra responded that Mr. Cassidy just attended the Ford meeting where Mr. Farley explained the new program for the future; and every Ford dealership will have an option where they sign up for the full electrification package. He stated that their location will definitely be a part of this as this is one of the top premier Ford stores in the nation and they will participate 100 percent in all of those new endeavors. He commented that he believes the program will shift a bit before coming to fruition as it is still early.*

*Mr. Hooper questioned whether there were any thoughts to add a Lincoln dealership.*

*Mr. Serra responded that they would love to have it but it is not available, nor is it a part of any discussion.*

*Mr. Hooper commented that it would be awesome if the property could be squared off with the Thai restaurant as that building is in poor condition.*

*Mr. Serra responded that he does not want to comment at this time and is trying to just be a good neighbor. He commented that he did not like their current dealer facility when they purchased it three years ago, and stated that it is not good for their associates or clients. He stated that Ford is not asking them to do this. He stated that Ford had zero requirements and would allow them to continue with the current facility; however, he did not think that it was the right thing to do.*

*Mr. Hooper stated that setting the building back and improving the access will help as trying to make a left-hand turn out of there is dangerous.*

*Mr. Serra stated that Mr. Burley and his team did a wonderful job laying it out. He commented that unfortunately because of the size of the lot, they have to stay in operation and Bloom Construction will have to do the construction with the dealership in front.*

*Mr. Dettloff thanked Mr. Serra for his commitment to the community. He concurred that the design looks great. He thanked them for their recent purchase of the Shelton-Buick-GMC dealership. He noted that he had his car serviced at Serra recently and he commented that the employees were so happy with the change in management.*

*Mr. Serra credited Mr. Cassidy noting that he is the operational person. He commented that he got the same reaction from the associates as to the direction and support Mr. Cassidy is giving them.*

*Ms. Neubauer stated that she really likes how everything looks and that they*

are invested in ensuring they are a good neighbor in supplementing with additional trees for more buffering. She commented that it is smart to air condition the service bays to create that noise barrier. She stated that if the community is unhappy with you it is not good business. She concurred with Dr. Bowyer regarding the trees in the parking lot and stated that it will be a safety feature for the cars zipping around the lot. She stated that it will be a huge improvement.

Mr. Serra commented that if the trees drop on the cars in the parking lot, the landscape architect will be the one to clean them.

Mr. Struzik stated that he would echo comments that have been said and agrees with Mr. Serra's assessment of the current property. It will be a significant investment and improvement for that corner and in the community. He commented that he walked through the dealership property today to look at the current condition, and asked about the far west masonry wall noting it has razor wire at the top. He questioned whether the razor wire is necessary and if it would stay as-is.

Mr. Tulikangas responded that their plans are to maintain that wall. He commented that he wasn't aware that there was razor wire on it and stated that it could easily be removed.

Mr. Struzik noted that the site is so open and there is access from so many ways and the wire is not something he is used to seeing in the community. He asked if it could be removed. He stated that he liked the fact that some of the high quality trees on the west side of the site are being kept. He noted that he likes that the buffer to the residents to the west as well as the noise has already been addressed. He commented that there will be more completed sidewalk on Auburn Road with this proposal as well as less driveways on both Auburn and Rochester.

Ms. Denstaedt stated that this is a much-needed change on that corner especially on the Auburn Road side. She questioned the hours of operation and asked what the busiest times will be as the corner is very congested. She asked what the timeframe would be for its completion.

Mr. Cassidy responded that their current operation which they foresee will stay the same is 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-6 p.m. on Friday, and 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Saturday. He commented that lunch times and early evenings are the busiest times.

One of the team members in the audience responded that it would be approximately two years for completion depending upon weather and the supply chain.

Mr. Weaver commented that the wall is difficult to find on the plans and commented that it does not look like it goes all the way down to Auburn Road. He asked if they were planning to extend the wall down to Auburn to match the existing.

*Mr. Tulikangas responded that he believes the wall goes just to the north side of the residential parcel that is going to be maintained as residential. He stated that they plan to maintain the entire wall and no extension is proposed. He commented that he could add some verbiage to that effect in the construction documents.*

*Mr. Weaver stated that he is less concerned about the wire with all the other improvements. He asked if that would be open to allow the neighbors to walk back and forth and window-shop or would it be walled off again.*

*Mr. Tulikangas responded that the wall is to remain where it is but it will go only about halfway down the parcel.*

*Mr. Weaver questioned whether the existing trees were intended to be kept and why they didn't look at doing some detention in that area.*

*Mr. Tulikangas responded that they did look at doing some surface detention there but it didn't work out with the grading on the parcel.*

*Mr. Weaver noted that the restaurant was mentioned, and he asked if they had seen the plans.*

*One of the team members in the audience noted that he had spoken to the restaurant owner and they have secured a signed agreement with him at the request of the Road Commission. The property owner, who isn't the operator of the restaurant, is very excited about it and he does not see any issues at all. He commented that he believes the opportunity may come up for a property acquisition at some point.*

*Mr. Weaver noted that there are some trees on the plan that will produce berries or fruit and he pointed out that there are some crabapples on Rochester Road. He commented that on the plan it appears that they are planted a little closer to the parking area than on the rendering. He stated that it is a great plan and a great looking building.*

*Mr. Gallina stated that much of what he was thinking was offered by his fellow commissioners, and he said that he was excited as he looked through the plans. He stated that he has frequented Huntington Ford and when the switch came over, he would offer that the commitment was really impressive to him. As a customer, the functionality will be fantastic and it makes sense to him that it could go from a top-20 to a top-10 dealership. He noted that as a community it is great to see that when things are built or rebuilt things are considered for the residents. He commented that the setback will be better as right now the dealership is very close to the road. He mentioned that he saw two different dealerships up north that have similar branding. He stated it will be good for the community.*

*Mr. Dettloff questioned how many more jobs will be created with the expanded development.*

*One of the team members responded that it would be as many new jobs as they*

could get.

Chairperson Brnabic noted that the rezoning requires a public hearing and opened the Public Hearing at 7:40 p.m. Seeing no one wishing to speak, she closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Hooper moved the motion in the packet to recommend to City Council approval of the rezoning request. It was seconded by Ms. Neubauer.

After calling for a roll call vote, Chairperson Brnabic announced that the motion passed unanimously and congratulated the applicants.

Ms. Roediger noted that the rezoning item would move to the October 10, 2022 City Council Meeting for first reading.

Mr. Hooper moved the motion in the packet for the Tree Removal Permit, which was seconded by Ms. Neubauer.

After calling for a voice vote, Chairperson Brnabic announced that the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hooper moved the motion in the packet for site plan approval, and added a third condition of removing the barbed wire on the west screen wall and anywhere else it currently exists on the property. The motion was seconded by Ms. Neubauer.

After calling for a voice vote, Chairperson Brnabic announced that the motion passed unanimously, and congratulated the applicant for their site plan approval.

Mr. Serra thanked the Commission for their support.

**A motion was made by Hooper, seconded by Neubauer, that this matter be Recommended for Approval to the City Council Regular Meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 9 - Bowyer, Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer, Struzik and Weaver

**Resolved**, in the matter of File No. JNRNB2021-0034 (Serra Ford Rezoning, 2890 S. Rochester Rd.) the Planning Commission recommends approval to City Council of the proposed rezoning of an approximate 4.7 acre portion of Parcel No. 15-27-477-073 from B-2 General Business District/FB-3 Flex Business Overlay to B-3 Shopping Center Business District with FB-3 Flex Business Overlay with following findings:

**Findings for Approval**

1. The B-3/FB-3 Zoning Districts are appropriate zoning districts at this location as they are compatible with the goals and objectives of the Master Land Use Plan to service residents of the community and the region.
2. Approval of the proposed rezoning will allow for a use that will complement the existing surrounding land uses and will be a logical extension of and improvement to the existing



auto dealership site.

3. The proposed rezoning is consistent with the criteria for approval of an amendment to the Zoning Map, listed in Section 138-1.200.D of the Zoning Ordinance.

**2022-0423**

Request for Approval of a Tree Removal Permit - File No. JNRNB2022-0010 - for removal and replacement of 30 trees for the Serra Ford auto dealership on approximately seven acres located northwest of the intersection of Rochester and Auburn roads, from B-2 General Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay to B-3 Shopping Center Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay, Joseph Serra, Serra Works of Rochester Hills, LLC, Applicant

**A motion was made by Hooper, seconded by Neubauer, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 9 - Bowyer, Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer, Struzik and Weaver

**Resolved**, in the matter of File No. JNRNB2021-0034 (Serra Ford) the Planning Commission grants a Tree Removal Permit, based on plans received by the Planning Department on June 15, 2022 with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

**Findings**

- 1, The proposed removal and replacement of regulated trees is in conformance with the City's Tree Conservation Ordinance.
2. The applicant is proposing to remove thirty (30) regulated trees and no specimen trees, with twenty seven (27) replacement trees required, and with twenty seven (27) replacement trees proposed to be installed.

**Conditions**

1. Tree protective fencing, as reviewed and approved by the City staff, shall be installed prior to temporary grade being issued by Engineering.

No payment to the City's tree fund is required.

**2022-0422**

Request for Site Plan Approval - File No. JNRNB2022-0010 - a new auto dealership located on approximately seven acres located northwest of Rochester and Auburn roads, Parcel No. 15-27-477-073, currently zoned B-2 General Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay with requested rezoning of B-3 Shopping Center Business with an FB-3 Flexible Business Overlay, Joseph Serra, Serra Works of Rochester Hills, LLC, Applicant

**A motion was made by Hooper, seconded by Neubauer, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 9 - Bowyer, Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hooper, Neubauer, Struzik and Weaver

**Resolved**, in the matter of File No. JNRNB2021-0034 (Serra Ford) the Planning Commission approves the Site Plan, based on plans received by the Planning Department on June 15, 2022 with the following findings and subject to the following conditions:

**Findings**

1. The site plan and supporting documents demonstrate that all applicable requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, with the exception of the modifications requested, as well as other City Ordinances, standards, and requirements, can be met subject to the conditions noted below.
2. The proposed project will be accessed from Rochester Rd. and Auburn Rd. with reductions in access points along both roads, thereby promoting safety and convenience of vehicular traffic both within the site and on adjoining streets.
3. The proposed improvements should have a satisfactory and harmonious relationship with the development on-site as well as existing development in the adjacent vicinity.
4. The proposed development will not have an unreasonably detrimental or injurious effect upon the natural characteristics and features of the site or those of the surrounding area.
5. The applicant has demonstrated that a modification to allow for the site plan exceeding the permitted maximum number of parking spaces, with 205 spaces required and 513 spaces approved, is appropriate based on the fact that vast majority of the number of spaces proposed in excess of the Zoning Ordinance are specifically for the display/storage of vehicles for sale and not typical parking spaces necessary for the operation of the business.
6. The applicant has demonstrated that a modification to not meet the right-of-way landscape requirements, that includes eighteen (18) canopy trees and eleven (11) ornamental trees along Rochester Rd. and eleven (11) canopy trees and six (6) ornamental trees along Auburn Rd., is appropriate due to the location of the existing underground utilities, limited road and pathway sight distance clearances on Rochester Rd. and due to the location of existing overhead and underground utilities, and limited road and pathway sight clearances on Auburn Rd. To offset the requested modification, the applicant has provided a variety of ornamental grasses and shrubs with some trees along the parking lot as a replacement.

**Conditions**

1. Address all applicable comments from other City departments and outside agency review letters, prior to final approval by staff.
2. Provide a landscape bond in the amount of \$126,375, plus inspection fees, as adjusted by staff as necessary, prior to the preconstruction meeting with Engineering.
3. Remove the barbed wire on the west screen wall and anywhere else it currently exists on the property.