

Office of offsite parking used by Lifetime Fitness patrons during scheduled events.

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

Aye 6 - Brnabic, Dettloff, Hooper, Schroeder, Schultz and Yukon

Nay 2 - Kaltsounis and Reece

Excused 1 - Morita

2016-0400 Request for Adoption and Recommendation of the Auburn Road Corridor Study

Attachments: [Draft PC Memo Anzek & Roediger 12-15-16.docx](#)
[AuburnRdCorridorPlan_JanuaryDraft.pdf](#)
[Edits from planning commission draft.pdf](#)
[OHM Cost Estimate.pdf](#)
[Public Comment Emails.pdf](#)

(Reference: Staff Report prepared by Sara Roediger, dated 12/15/2016, Draft Plan for Auburn Road Corridor)

Ms. Roediger stated that staff has been working with a steering committee, the consultant team and the general public over the past year to prepare a draft plan for the Auburn Road Corridor (ARC). She introduced Bradley Strader, AICP, PTP, Senior Associate and Caitlin Mallory-Marcon, Associate, MKSK, 687 W. Forest Avenue, Detroit, MI 48201 to present the power point for the draft plan.

Ms. Roediger recapped that public meetings were held, a survey was undertaken, and the steering committee developed made up of Planning Commissioners, City Council Members, business owners, residents and various other interested parties. She noted that a wish list was developed and a market study was undertaken to determine what the market could bear for the area.

She explained that Mr. Strader would go into depth in review of the market study and the culmination of the work that went into the draft Plan which is now available on the City's website and included on an Auburn Corridor Redevelopment Facebook page started by area residents. She added that 150 emails were sent to those who came to any of the public meetings or expressed interest with a direct link to the plan requesting comments and feedback. She noted that following the presentation this evening, should the Planning Commission feel comfortable with the plan, perhaps the members would entertain a motion to adopt and recommend for City Council's consideration and adoption of the Plan. She stated that Council will be making the policy and budgeting decisions that would bring the Plan to implementation.

Mr. Strader, stated that there have been previous plans done for Auburn Road for the Brooklands area; and the City revisited the previous plans with a goal of incorporating the best ideas they contained, and developed new ideas and goals with a focus on implementation. He noted that while the previous plans were well-designed, change has not happened for the area. He commented that in addition to the market study, meetings were held between the steering

committee and stakeholders, members of the public, and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and City staff.

Plan Goals included strengthening the overall district as a unique destination with quality commercial development and neighborhood areas, calming traffic to make the area safer and improve the environment particularly for pedestrians, providing parking, defining a clear transition into the neighborhoods, reviewing opportunities for cooperation between the public and private sector, and finding opportunities for funding for changes to the road, the pedestrian areas, and buffering between the commercial development and the neighborhood.

He explained that a number of committee meetings were held, along with three public open houses, and door-to-door visits with businesses were undertaken between the City's Economic Development Staff. Howard Kohn, from the Chesapeake Group, a fourth team member, undertook the market study. In addition, telephone surveys and website information furthered the outreach to collect additional information. He stated that the plan is a balance between technical evaluation, past plans and input from the public, stakeholders, and the MDOT, who has jurisdiction over the road.

Ms. Molloy-Marcon highlighted public input, noting that three open houses were held at various stages throughout the project, with each open house highlighting different information. She stated that the open houses had great attendance, especially from Brooklands area residents; and mixed opinions were noted on certain aspects of the Plan. She commented that while the community is very supportive of doing something on Auburn Road, suggestions were offered to close off or cul-de-sac some of the residential streets, add a public plaza or incorporate additional parking. She noted that these suggestions were polarizing, with some individuals requesting streets be closed off and others not wanting them to be closed. She stated that almost everyone's opinion favored general pedestrian improvements, incorporating additional sidewalks ensuring that the sidewalk will be continuous on both the north and south sides of Auburn Road. Adding safe pedestrian crossings was stressed by the Principal at Reuther Middle School as well many parents of Reuther students. She mentioned that many people were interested in having more restaurants and more of an outdoor cafe environment along the street, and paving the alleys was also a very popular suggestion.

She noted that in addition to the public open houses, a survey was posted online and received a total of 158 responses. The survey included questions on the polarizing issues mentioned before, including whether it would be appropriate to suggest that additional parking be added that would encroach into the residential neighborhood by one or two lots in order to have a larger, more centralized parking facility for the entire district. She highlighted some of the responses, noting that 105 respondents stated that they think adding parking in a centralized parking district is an appropriate solution as long as its heavily buffered from the neighborhood, 24 responded that additional centralized parking was not needed, and 21 responded that while they thought it was a good idea, they wished it to be located elsewhere along the corridor.

She stated that a second polarizing question regarding the closure of some of

the streets to become cul-de-sacs and adding more public space or providing additional parking provided more split answers. She noted that 86 respondents felt it necessary to undertake street closures within the neighborhood, while 57 did not favor it. Thirteen respondents did not favor the streets that were suggested for being closed off and made suggestions for other streets to be closed. She pointed out that the overwhelming majority of the responses came from the Brooklands area residents themselves.

She explained that stakeholder interviews both in person and by telephone were also conducted during the market study performed by Howard Kohn. She commented that many respondents relayed the negative perception that the Brooklands area has overall. Most property owners contacted along the corridor were very open to redevelopment of their property and improvements to their businesses; and everyone seemed to be in support of the capital improvements being suggested along the roadway. The market study yielded that most patrons in the service area live nearby within the Brooklands area or in a neighboring community. The market study suggests that the general area could absorb an additional 45 to 64 housing units, 20,000 to 27,000 square feet of office and technology-driven space, and 41,000 square feet of retail goods and services.

She explained that while the study concentrated heavily on the Brooklands area, the manner in which the concepts could be applied along the various other nodes along the Auburn Road Corridor were also reviewed. She highlighted the intersection at Adams and Auburn Roads, showing that additional landscape or relocation of buildings closer to the road, management of traffic flow and access points could also improve traffic flow and buffer new developments from adjacent single family neighborhoods is important.

Mr. Strader commented that one of the suggested plan changes came out of the joint meeting between Council and the Planning Commission was to look at relocating entrances to be on the side of the buildings, with parking to the rear. Another item that came out of that joint meeting was to look at the intersection of John R and Auburn Road for incorporating mixed uses and consolidating some of the driveways in that area.

He noted that encouraging reinvestment by property owners to improve their buildings and facades caught the attention of both the residents and some of the property owners. During the steering committee meetings, it was discussed how might the City help provide some stimulus for change, how Oakland County might be able to provide some design services on facades, or how seed money might be available to help. He listed improvements such as changing the design of the building by incorporating a new facade, having the parking located on the side and/or at the rear, creating more pedestrian areas in the front, allowing more room for stormwater management and landscaping, cleaning up the signs, and revisiting zoning. He commented that the feeling is that more than a zoning change is needed to encourage reinvestment.

He explained that LSL Planning reviewed the area's zoning and while they had some recommendations for minor changes, the feeling is that generally the Ordinance crafted not that long ago has some really good elements. One

suggestion is to require more parking in the Brooklands area. While the City reduced the amount of parking required, because of the variety of uses in the Brooklands area, it is suggested that perhaps there is a need to increase the amount of parking required to avoid any parking pressure issues or result in people parking in the neighborhoods. Another suggestion was to perhaps allow more height, as the market study showed that there is some desire for mixed use or perhaps two or three story residential buildings. Another component suggested by a number of residents was to incorporate buffering to keep the noise and activity from the commercial area better separated from the neighborhoods. Dressing up the alleyways to make them more walkable and inviting to pedestrians or providing a wall, fence or landscape buffer would better separate the neighborhoods from parking and screen headlights.

He noted that alternative road designs were reviewed. He stated that traffic volumes are between 11,000 and 13,000 cars, approaching the capacity of a two-lane road and causing backups especially during the afternoon rush hour. Improvements at the Dequindre intersection would help; however, the volumes would be better served by a three-lane road. He noted that a three-lane road can handle 15,000 to 18,000 vehicles per day and removes turning vehicles from the traffic lanes. Parking alternatives included incorporating angle parking; however MDOT would not favor angle parking due to road speeds and volumes. A slip road was also suggested with parking removed from the travel lanes as an alternative. City engineers expressed concern that this alternative would add a significant amount of pavement in an area that already has stormwater issues. A favorite alternative of planners, traffic engineers, MDOT, and the public and stakeholders was the three-lane road, where the center turn lane could be a raised median or hardscape where it does not need to accommodate left turns. This would eliminate parking in the front of the buildings and allow for better-organized parking on the side and in the rear, accommodating both existing and future development. This alternative best met the goals of the study and also had the most enthusiastic response from the MDOT engineers because it improves safety. Speeds would slow somewhat with a typical speed in the area being 35 miles per hour instead of the current 40 to 45 miles per hour. MDOT suggested closing off some of the driveways and access points to improve the capacity of the road and reduce the crash potential. He noted that all of the City's plans for this area over the years had reviewed closures for safety reasons. He commented that the pros and cons to street closures have long been discussed. While it may improve safety by having fewer access points, it would create additional traffic on the streets that do remain open. He stated that residents expressed concern regarding school busses and snow plowing if streets are closed. Discussions on which streets should be closed reviewed whether adjacent alleys were public or private, or whether it would reduce parking pressure for the neighborhoods.

He commented that MDOT would also require a traffic study to show the impact on traffic operations of the shift of traffic to adjacent open roads. Considerations could be made to narrowing a street entrance or making it one-way to direct traffic flow. Objections raised included the possibility that cars would cut through businesses to avoid certain intersections. He reviewed what could be done in an area where the street was closed, showing additional parking or a plaza or public space. He mentioned incorporating a gateway or a more pronounced

crosswalk to welcome people to the area.

He noted that one of the items that came out of the joint meeting between City Council and the Planning Commission was the desire for a more detailed action plan, to help integrate the plan into the next Master Land Use Plan Update, which the City will begin in 2017. There was also some discussion that the portion of Auburn Road from Livernois to Dequindre might be turned back to the City at some point and how MDOT might be able to incorporate shared funding to rebuild the road. Concerns were expressed regarding stormwater and what MDOT's responsibility might be in correcting runoff problems. He noted that the height of the roadway causes runoff onto the adjacent properties and a solution is needed. Discussions are needed with Oakland County to see what they could offer in terms of helping with a façade program.

He explained that this is a concept plan, and that the next step would be a traffic operations study and detailed engineering work. The current engineering estimate is a little over \$3 million to rebuild the road and undertake the public improvements and right-of-way work, with approximately 10 percent for engineering design costs; and a funding source would need to be identified. He mentioned that there are transportation alternatives programs from MDOT and other available programs to help create a more pedestrian-friendly roadway. It is also hoped that there will be additional monies from the new administration that would be dedicated to infrastructure improvements. He stressed that the City should be aggressive in seeking internal and external funding options. He noted that there was discussion toward the formation of a more cohesive business association in the area, or perhaps a corridor improvement authority or business improvement district, to better work with the businesses to look toward shared parking. As City staff have offered that they have a good dialogue going with the business owners, they could serve as a resource to help assemble marketing and promotional materials for the area and change the attitude on how the Brooklands district is viewed.

He mentioned that the City owns a parcel at the west end of the area, and discussions at the first workshop centered around how the lot could be best used, whether it be for public space or parking. The parcel is not centrally located, and Mr. Kohn thought it might be a great site for redevelopment into a two- or three-story mixed use residential property. He commented that there are several options for that lot that could be considered as the plan moves forward.

Chairperson Brnabic called for any public comment:

Scott Campbell, 2793 Harrison Avenue, Rochester Hills, MI 48307 Mr. Campbell stated that when he reviewed the draft plan that was emailed to him, he did not see any road closures. He expressed concern about the children walking to school safely because when Hamlin Road was closed, there was an increase in cut-through traffic through the subdivisions. He said that he was skeptical of internet polls because people could submit duplicate responses. He said that he did not support two- and three-story buildings due to an increase in noise and light. He expressed concern that additional restaurants with outdoor seating may add to the noise.

Sam Loginack, 3231 Melvin Avenue, Rochester Hills, MI 48306 Mr. Loginack expressed his appreciation and support for the draft plan. He stated that pedestrian friendly communities experience spiritual, physical and community health. He said he would be in support of the closure of his street for the sake of safety.

Dwayne Zysek, A & S Unlimited Heating and Cooling, 1663 E. Auburn Road, Rochester Hills, MI 48307 Mr. Zysek stated that his business has been located on Auburn Road since 1990. He noted that pedestrian traffic along Auburn Road is dangerous and that cut-through traffic into the subdivisions is common during 6:00 p.m. traffic. He said he hoped that City Council would be in support of the plan.

Kathleen Campbell, 2793 Harrison Avenue, Rochester Hills, MI 48307 Mrs. Campbell stated that the Brooklands neighbors had created a Facebook page and that the main concern was road closures. She stated that there had been an increase in cut-through traffic with the closure of Eastern Street. She expressed her concern for the children walking to school with no sidewalks or streetlights. She said she was in support of closing Gerald Street to address cut-through traffic. She said that because the emailed plan had not listed street closures, residents had not attended the meeting.

Ms. Roediger stated that for clarification purposes, the draft plan has not changed and is the same plan that is posted on the Facebook page. She noted that the graphic shows potential locations for closures but that nothing has been changed.

Chairperson Brnabic added that it was possible there would be temporary closures as well.

Mr. Kaltsounis stated that he had attended some of open house meetings. He noted the residents' passion and support of improvement of the neighborhood. He stated that change begins with a plan, if there is no plan, no change will be implemented. He stated that the meetings have resulted in clear communication with residents. He stated that the draft plan is similar to a puzzle - with each component of the plan as recommendations shifted around until everything can come together as a complete plan for a successful design.

Mr. Anzek stated that the City has had concerns regarding the Auburn Road Corridor. He noted that everyone has worked to draft a fresh look and that the plan is a good guide for future decisions. He indicated that Councilperson Morita was not able to attend tonight's meeting but had requested him to express her views on the plan on her behalf. He stated that she is in support of the plan, but had requested one modification on page 35 - Business Improvement District (BID) vs. Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA). He stated she expressed her concerns with the City's difficulty implementing special assessment districts. He stated that she was in agreement with the plan, and mentioned while the BID is a possibility, her support is for a CIA using tax increment financing capture (TIF) to fund the plan.

He reported that MDOT would be working on right turn improvements at the east and west bound intersections sometime during 2017. He stated that once the plan is approved, it could be considered for inclusion under the City's Capital Improvement Program.

Ms. Roediger added that Paul Shumejko, City's Traffic Engineer has been working with Reuther Middle School to implement a safe routes to school program. In response to public concerns expressed regarding survey responses, she noted that the online survey had limitation designs of one response per IP address.

Mr. Schroeder had the following questions, regarding:

- Right-of-way acquisition required for setbacks
- Maintenance of alleys - private vs. public
- Alleys would have to be marked for access and identification purposes for the fire, police and emergency services and the City's Department of Public Services
- Whether renovation could be undertaken of just the building facades to keep costs lower.

He stated that detailed studies for both traffic and drainage would be primary for implementation of the plan.

Mr. Reece expressed skepticism about the parking design and stated that the increase in the number of larger vehicles could be problematic.

Mr. Strader responded that there are no right-of-way acquisition requirements for setbacks. He stated that alleys are privately owned and will remain privately owned unless the City determines a way beyond acquisition to make them public. He suggested that the alleys could be marked for rear service drives for the City street identification purposes. He explained that the feedback from the business owners revealed that storm water and building code requirements, paving of parking lots, permit fees, redesigned storm water were cost prohibitive but perhaps special waivers in this district might remove some of the barriers for redevelopment. He stated that the parking spaces could be adjusted to be wider and a buffer strip incorporated to allow for more room.

Mr. Hooper indicated his support of the plan and the implementation of the CIA with a TIF to move the plan forward.

MOTION by Kaltsounis, seconded by Hooper, the Rochester Hills Planning Commission finds the recommendations of the December 2016 draft Auburn Road Corridor Plan are consistent with the overall policies and goals of the City as outlined in the adopted Master Land Use Plan and therefore hereby adopts the Auburn Road Corridor Plan and recommends that the City Council do the same.

Approved

Aye 8 - Brnabic, Dettloff, Hooper, Kaltsounis, Reece, Schroeder, Schultz and Yukon

Excused 1 - Morita

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2016-0473 Request for Approval of the 2017 Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Attachments: [Memo 2017 meeting schedule 12-16-16.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Kaltsounis, seconded by Yukon, that this matter be Approved as Amended, with July 18th being changed to July 25th. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 8 - Brnabic, Dettloff, Hooper, Kaltsounis, Reece, Schroeder, Schultz and Yukon

Excused 1 - Morita

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairperson Brnabic reminded the Commissioners that the next Regular Meeting was scheduled for January 17, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Commissioners, and upon motion by Mr. Kaltsounis, Chairperson Brnabic adjourned the Regular Meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission

Nicholas O. Kaltsounis, Secretary