



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Planning Commission / City Council

Joint Meeting

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CITY COUNCIL

*David J. Blair, Jason Carlock, Bradley Limberg, Diana Mannino,
Theresa Mungoli, Marvie Neubauer, and Mark Skelcy*

PLANNING COMMISSION

*Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick,
Greg Hooper, Scott Struzik, and Ben Weaver*

Monday, February 2, 2026

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

In accordance with the provisions of Act 267 of the Public Acts of 1976, the Open Meetings Act, as amended, notice is hereby given that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission and the Rochester Hills City Council will hold a Special Joint Meeting on Monday, February 2, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. The purpose of the Joint Meeting is to review and act on the City's Planning and Economic Development Annual Report for 2025 and to discuss Planning projects and priorities for 2026.

CALL TO ORDER

*Vice Chairperson Brnabic welcomed newly elected City Council members
Diana Mannino, Bradley Limberg, and Mark Skelcy.*

ROLL CALL

Present 13 - David Blair, Jason Carlock, Theresa Mungoli, Marvie Neubauer, Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick, Scott Struzik, Bradley Limberg, Diana Mannino and Mark Skelcy
Excused 2 - Greg Hooper and Ben Weaver

Others Present

*Bryan Barnett, Mayor
Dan Christ, City Attorney
Sara Roediger, Planning & Economic Development Director
Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary*

Mr. Hooper and Mr. Weaver provided prior notice that they were unable to attend and were excused.

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice Chairperson Brnabic opened the floor for public comment for non agenda items.

Seeing no one wishing to speak and no comment cards submitted, she closed public comment at 7:02 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

2026-0040

Planning and Economic Development Annual Report

Ms. Roediger introduced Chris McLeod to present the annual report. She praised his work, noting that he had significantly improved upon last year's report to enhance transparency and interactivity. She explained that while state law requires an annual report of Planning Commission activities, the department has expanded this requirement into a more advanced and comprehensive document. She stated that the goal of the department is to remain super transparent regarding development and zoning information, ensuring that data is readily available to the public whenever requested.

Ms. Roediger expressed hope that the Planning Commission members had reviewed the report and would feel comfortable approving it during the session. Upon their approval, the report is slated to move forward to the City Council agenda.

Mr. McLeod addressed the Planning Commission and City Council to present the 2025 Annual Report. He noted that while state law defines a requirement for an annual report, the Rochester Hills Planning Department has taken that mandate to levels far beyond the typical community standard. He observed that many municipalities might simply staple meeting minutes together or write a brief paragraph to satisfy the statute, but Rochester Hills strives for a much more advanced and transparent document.

He explained that for the current year, the department moved the annual report onto the ArcGIS system. He highlighted the GIS department as a vital collaborator in producing both the interactive report and the high-detail maps utilized by the boards. He emphasized that such collaboration within City Hall allows the department to push projects further than they could in isolation.

M. McLeod noted that the Planning and Economic Development (PED) department continues to operate under three primary pillars: preserve, enhance and diversify. To preserve includes protecting established neighborhoods, irreplaceable natural environments, a healthy business community, and the city's historical assets to maintain a first-rate quality of life. The department seeks to enhance the city's role as a regional destination by improving sustainability, real estate options, pedestrian environments, and cultural resources. To diversify includes focusing efforts on broadening housing choices, transportation alternatives, employment opportunities, and the commercial tax base.

With regard to administrative and coordination roles, Staff provides expert advice and ordinance interpretation to residents, business owners, and various city boards.

Economic Development efforts include daily engagement with the business community regarding expansion and retention programs to ensure their needs are heard by city leadership.

Mr. McLeod described planners as the "quarterbacks" or lead coordinators for city projects, a role he noted Ms. Roediger performs effectively across all departments.

Regarding 2025 milestones and successes, he noted that primary goal for 2025 was the update to the Master Plan, which saw Planning Commission adoption in October and City Council approval in November. Also the City's Gateway Master Plan focused on city entrances-notably at M-59 and Rochester Road-is approximately 95-97% complete, with final restoration slated for the spring.

He explained that the city is managing a \$72.1 million restoration and remediation environmental grant (after administrative costs). While \$2 million has been deployed for assessments, the upcoming year is expected to see large-scale spending as active remediation begins.

Through an accelerated effort led by Ms. Roediger and Pam Guevara, the LDFA plan was approved in approximately three months, significantly faster than the six months estimated by the county.

With regard to community events, the "Rhise Cup" corporate Olympics saw participation grow to 150 employees from 21 local businesses, nearly doubling its previous size. This event also facilitated the donation of 11,000 pounds of food to Neighborhood House.

With regard to residential growth, 55 single-family homes were approved within two developments (The Oaks and Oak Creek), along with 80 multiple-family units.

Mr. McLeod stated that the commercial vacancy rate remains at an exceptionally low 5.7%. The city welcomed 105 new businesses in 2025, averaging one new business opening every three days.

He explained that development resulted in the permitted removal of 917 regulated trees, but the city required the planting of nearly 1,400 replacement trees to ensure long-term canopy growth. Total wetland impacts were limited to 1.61 acres.

Mr. McLeod showcased an interactive tool for public use developed with GIS that acts as a "one-stop shop" for property data. By entering an address, users can see if a property is impacted by steep slopes or wetlands and receive a direct link to the applicable city ordinance. Additionally, an interactive

development projects map is available to the public, featuring clickable pins that reveal site plans and project details.

At Ms. Roediger's urging, Mr. McLeod and the GIS team presented their work at the Michigan Association of Planning conference in Kalamazoo. Despite a Friday morning time slot, the session attracted 70-80 attendees interested in how Rochester Hills utilizes its resources.

The department received a state GIS award for the "Environmental Story" project, a success Mr. McLeod attributed to the technical skill of the GIS staff in executing complex ideas.

Mr. McLeod provided project updates including the Adams Road project, noting that: Staff continues to move forward with the "preferred alternative" for the Adams Road project, which has been a major focus for Ms. Roediger.

Other notable projects discussed included the Rochester Office and Retail Center, cider mill storage renovations, and several redevelopments along South Rochester Road.

With regard to legislative work, he noted the Planning Commission processed administrative amendments in March, a PUD amendment to allow for restoration, and "housekeeping" amendments in December to prepare for 2026.

Ms. Roediger resumed the presentation, emphasizing that while Mr. McLeod is modest regarding his work, the level of transparency and technical detail in the city's mapping is likely unmatched by any other community. She encouraged the boards to explore the "Digital Property Map" in depth, noting that users can click on any parcel to instantly see zoning classifications, specific permitted uses, and required setbacks. The tool also allows residents and developers to perform measurements and view historical aerial photography, providing a comprehensive "one-stop shop" for all pertinent property information and attached ordinances, such as historic district status or wetland restrictions.

Ms. Roediger stressed that while the needs of the city's 76,000 residents are paramount, equal attention must be paid to the business community to ensure Rochester Hills remains a premier location for commerce.

Established nearly 20 years ago as one of the first of its kind in Michigan, the Mayor's Business Council (MBC) continues to serve as a primary bridge to local businesses. She noted that the Mayor's connections with the U.S. Conference of Mayors have allowed the city to host speakers of a caliber rarely seen in local government, including former Governor Rick Snyder and local celebrity Carol Kane.

She explained that quarterly events, including a summer fun outing and a holiday celebration both held at Great Oaks, featured prominent figures like Mayor Mike Duggan and serve as the city's primary business retention strategy.

Beyond traditional networking, the RHISE events and the RHISE Cup-developed by Pam Guevara-have seen rapid growth.

She explained that the Diversity of Thought program connects specific professional cohorts, such as HR and IT directors from different member businesses, allowing them to collaborate on hiring challenges and "think outside the box" regarding talent management. Ms. Roediger explained that these initiatives create deep-rooted relationships between the City and businesses, making it more likely that companies will choose to renew their leases in Rochester Hills rather than relocate.

Based on the "Innovative by Nature" brand, the Innovation Forest project features "Evo Oaks" installations along the Clinton River Trail. The project received significant positive reinforcement on social media and is scheduled for final reorganization and completion this spring.

The Rhising Market event provides a platform for young entrepreneurs to showcase their skills and products; the department aims to create a permanent plan to highlight these creators at various city events moving forward.

Regarding board activities, Ms. Roediger commended the Planning Commission for being the city's most industrious board, having met 18 times in 2025 across regular meetings and study sessions. This volume of work exceeded the meeting count of all other city boards and commissions combined.

A major 2025 achievement was the successful renewal of the Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) for another 20-year term just before its expiration. A key goal for the coming year is the "LDFA 2.0" plan, which will define how the authority focuses its funds for the next two decades.

Regarding regional leadership and strategic goals, the department's innovative approach has made it a regional model; representatives from Northville and Romulus are visiting the city next week specifically to study how Rochester Hills manages its resources to stay "ahead of the curve."

Following the heavy planning load of 2025, the department will focus 2026 on a new Economic Development Strategy and the implementation of ranked recommendations from the Master Plan survey.

After two years of preliminary environmental assessments as part of the EGLE remediation grant, 2026 is expected to be the year the city "turns the corner" toward active remediation. This phase will involve projects moving through the PUD process and coming before the boards for construction approval.

Ms. Roediger noted that the PED department has had a staffing transition and the team welcomed Olivia Romano in early 2026 to work alongside Jennifer MacDonald in managing customer needs, following the retirement of long-time staff member Mary Jo Pachla.

Ms. Roediger concluded by presenting the annual report as the "gold standard" for the state, essential for maintaining Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) certification. She then opened the floor for questions, noting the Planning Commission's pending approval of the document.

Mr. Dettloff expressed his appreciation for the presentation and the digital initiatives, describing the work as "amazing." Mr. Hetrick concurred, noting that it was clear why outside organizations are looking to Rochester Hills for leadership. He specifically praised the transition of city data into a "clickable form" and remarked on the "positive improvement" the Gateway plans have made to the overall look and feel of the city.

In response to Mr. Hetrick's inquiry regarding the prioritization of remediation projects under the Eagle Grant, Ms. Roediger provided a status update on four key non-city-owned sites currently undergoing assessment:

Madison Park / Suburban Softball Site: Active soil borings and data gathering are underway to determine construction feasibility and methods to mitigate off-site impacts.

Highland Park Site: Located on Avon Road across from the mobile home park near Yates, this site is undergoing similar assessment activities to understand environmental requirements.

Theodora Parcels: Situated at the southwest corner of School Road and Dequindre (directly across from Sakura), these parcels are currently in the assessment phase.

Hamlin Road Industrial Incubator: The city recently approved an application for a parcel near the corner of Hamlin and Dequindre for an industrial incubator space.

Ms. Roediger provided additional details on the proposed Hamlin Road development:

Development Model: The project is envisioned as a mixed-use storage and office development designed to provide small-scale incubator space for businesses to establish a physical address and store supplies before graduating to larger facilities.

Regional Significance: This would be the first development of its kind in Michigan, though the model is currently popular in other Midwestern states.

Timeline: While the applicants are eager to begin, they are currently in the initial assessment phase, which involves verifying existing data and collecting fresh soil samples.

Ms. Roediger acknowledged that while the EGLE Grant progress may have appeared quiet to the boards, a significant amount of "behind the scenes" work is occurring. She informed the group that while no major decisions have been

reached yet, staff expects significant impacts and updates to emerge within the next couple of months.

Mr. Hetrick addressed the departmental statistic regarding tree replacement, noting that planting one and a half times more trees than are removed is a critical figure for residents and boards concerned with tree preservation. Ms. Roediger provided the interesting fact that the City-led Nowicki Park project actually accounted for the highest number of tree removals and wetland impacts in the recent reporting period. She noted that without that specific public project, the impact numbers from private development would be significantly lower. She further observed that the City is currently planting double what it takes down.

Mr. Hetrick inquired about the context of the 1.6 acres of wetland impact and suggested that the annual report should express this impact as a percentage of the city's total wetland acreage to demonstrate that the city is a terrific steward of its natural resources. He stated that showing the impact is a small percentage, such as 2% of total wetlands, would be vital for residents to know the City takes these features seriously. Mr. McLeod expanded on this by explaining that wetland impacts are not approved at the Planning Commission level without rigorous oversight. He emphasized that the City utilizes a top-tier professional wetland consultant to ensure projects are fully vetted and ready before any environmental impacts are considered.

Mr. Hetrick praised the Diversity of Thought program, encouraging the department to continue the initiative on a regular basis. Ms. Roediger clarified that the primary focus of 2025 was ensuring the continued legal existence of the Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA). She highlighted that the City secured a 75% tax dollar match from the county, which is higher than the standard 50% policy. The department's first major task for 2026 is to work in tandem with the new Economic Development Strategy to officially allocate LDFA projects for the next 20-year cycle. Mr. Hetrick concluded his remarks by commending the staff for their terrific work across these various initiatives.

Vice Chairperson Brnabic inquired whether the figure of 1,388 trees represented actual trees planted or if it included contributions to the tree fund. Mr. McLeod clarified that the total included both trees currently planted and those designated to be planted, which accounts for both physical trees and tree fund equivalents. Vice Chairperson Brnabic expressed a desire for future clarity regarding the specific breakdown of actual plantings versus tree fund contributions, noting that significant funds are sometimes directed to the tree fund rather than being planted on-site. Mr. McLeod agreed to compile this data and mentioned that he and Matt Einhauser from the forestry department are exploring ways to encourage more on-site planting, including potentially increasing the cost of the tree fund to make it a less attractive alternative for developers.

Ms. Mannino raised a question regarding the outlook for high-density housing and whether the City was seeing an increase in requests from developers for large apartment projects similar to those recently occurring in the City of Rochester. Ms. Roediger explained that while the City receives a fair amount of requests for apartments and "missing middle" housing, the current ordinances

are quite restrictive and have been tightened over the years to address concerns regarding density. She noted that Rochester Hills is likely the second most restrictive community in the area, following only Oakland Township, and that most "easy" sites in the City have already been developed, leaving few options for high-density projects.

Mr. McLeod added that managing density expectations is a constant battle for staff, as the first question from many potential applicants involves getting more units or seeking a variance. He emphasized that the department filters out a significant number of developers before they ever submit a concept plan or reach the Planning Commission and City Council. Ms. Neubauer then asked if a motion was required to accept the report, and Ms. Roediger confirmed that the Planning Commission could act on it before it is presented to the City Council. Ms. Neubauer moved to accept the annual report and present it to City Council, a motion which was seconded by Mr. Hetrick. Vice Chairperson Brnabic called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

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

Aye 7 - Neubauer, Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hetrick and Struzik

Abstain 6 - Blair, Carlock, Mungioli, Limberg, Mannino and Skelcy

Excused 2 - Hooper and Weaver

Resolved, the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby accepts the 2025 Annual Report and associated Executive Summary for the Planning and Economic Development Department.

DISCUSSION

2026-0047

2026 Planning Efforts

- a. Transportation Master Plan Update & Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Grant
- b. Parks & Recreation Plan Update
- c. Community Stewardship Plan

Ms. Roediger introduced the upcoming strategic priorities for 2026, noting that the city is due for mandatory five-year updates to both the Transportation Master Plan and the Parks and Recreation Plan. She emphasized that the Parks and Recreation Plan is a critical document for maintaining the City's eligibility for state grant funding, which the administration aggressively pursues. Additionally, the City will initiate a Community Stewardship Plan - a recommendation from the Master Plan - focused on the efficient use of natural resources and fiscal responsibility in City operations and ordinances.

Ms. Roediger explained that in previous cycles, separate planning efforts often led to redundancies and public involvement fatigue, where the same stakeholders were asked to participate in multiple, overlapping focus groups. To address this, the City has coordinated a joint effort between the Planning, Transportation, and Parks departments to issue a consolidated Request for Proposal. The process will include a shared steering committee and consolidated project administration among the respective department directors

to ensure all initiatives are moving in the same direction. The Transportation division will integrate its recently awarded Safe Streets for All grant work with the broader Transportation Master Plan update, to streamline efforts related to pathways, traffic calming, and street safety. Staff from the environmental, forestry, and parks divisions have identified significant overlap between green space management and stewardship programs, justifying a coordinated planning approach.

In response to concerns from Ms. Mungioli regarding the potential for missing residents by combining engagement efforts, Ms. Roediger and Mr. McLeod detailed the proposed outreach model. Rather than three separate surveys, the City will utilize a single, statistically significant survey covering transportation, sustainability, and parks topics. Public events will be designed as one-stop shops where residents drawn by one topic, such as parks, will have the opportunity to provide meaningful input on transportation and stewardship as well. Ms. Mungioli stressed the importance of reaching non-digital residents, suggesting physical notices in water bills. Ms. Roediger confirmed that the goal is to make participation more convenient and meaningful by reducing the number of individual events residents are expected to attend. Mr. McLeod noted that the administrative efficiency gained from using one consultant for multiple plans could allow for additional follow-up meetings or alternative information-gathering methods that were previously not feasible. Ms. Roediger raised the point that despite the consolidated public events, the City will maintain individualized stakeholder groups for specific technical needs, such as engaging the Road Commission for transportation or local athletic organizations for the parks plan.

Ms. Neubauer raised concerns regarding the Transportation Master Plan, specifically questioning if this update would lead to a final resolution for the Adams Road expansion and the proposed roundabouts. She also highlighted urgent safety concerns at City schools, citing two EMS calls at Rochester High School that day, one of which involved a car accident. Ms. Neubauer emphasized that while school safety and road accidents are frequently discussed, there is a perceived lack of concrete action, particularly regarding pedestrian safety for students crossing major roads without adequate sidewalks. Ms. Mungioli added to the gravity of the situation by noting a past student fatality at Stoney Creek.

Ms. Roediger explained that these safety issues are the primary focus of the Safe Streets for All grant, which provided the City with nearly \$500,000 to analyze the safety of the entire transportation system. By integrating this grant work with the Transportation Master Plan update, the City intends to make safety one of the highest priorities of the plan. Ms. Neubauer reiterated that the plan must specifically address the need for sidewalks in front of schools where high volumes of students walk and cross major roads, moving beyond discussion to actual implementation.

Regarding the Adams Road project, Ms. Roediger clarified that it is a distinct initiative managed by the Road Commission rather than a standard City master plan update. This project has been a multi-year study involving several open

houses over the past three years. The Road Commission has identified a preferred alternative that includes three roundabouts and is currently finalizing the plan through state and federal highway authorities. The next phase for the Adams Road project involves an environmental assessment followed by an intensive search for funding sources to begin work.

Ms. Neubauer expressed ongoing skepticism regarding the Adams Road "preferred plan," noting that through three years of open houses, the selection of three roundabouts remained unclear to her. Mayor Barnett and Ms. Roediger clarified that the preferred alternative emerged from an exhaustive, multi-year study that evaluated various options, including five-lane and three-lane boulevards, before landing on a hybrid design. Ms. Roediger noted that this hybrid alternative was presented in the fall of 2025 and was generally well-received. Mayor Barnett added that while the project faces significant hurdles regarding funding and implementation, the Master Transportation Plan would likely adopt this vetted work as it represents substantial community input.

Mr. Struzik suggested that the City should look for opportunities to replicate the success of Drexel Gate Parkway in other areas, specifically naming Hampton Circle as a candidate for roadway reduction. He argued that Hampton Circle is unnecessarily wide for a residential neighborhood and that reducing the roadway could lower City maintenance costs while improving neighborhood safety. Ms. Roediger confirmed that such roadway "diets" for areas like Hampton Circle are already among the current transportation plan recommendations and will be evaluated during the upcoming update.

Regarding the development of a Community Stewardship Plan, Ms. Mungoli requested clarification on how it would differ from existing environmental and wetland assessments. Mr. McLeod explained that the plan will serve as a foundational framework or "guardrail" for decision-making across both the natural and built environments. He envisioned the plan starting with an inventory of the City's current environmental activities to ensure better cross-departmental awareness. He described it as a living document that will integrate stewardship principles into City projects and infrastructure decisions, emulating best practices across different areas of the City.

Ms. Roediger concluded the discussion by outlining the timeline for these initiatives, stating that the City intends to bid for the stewardship and parks and recreation plans this month. The goal is to bring the contract awards to the City Council this spring and have the final plans adopted by the end of 2026.

Ms. Mungoli inquired whether the Community Stewardship Plan would impact the City Council's strategic planning, Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and budget processes. Mr. McLeod responded that integration is a distinct possibility, noting that the stewardship framework could eventually be integrated into the weighted system used for the CIP. He expressed hope that once the plan is fully developed, considering stewardship in City projects and financial decisions will become second nature to all departments.

Ms. Mungoli also questioned how this new plan would dovetail with the recently

approved physical inventory of City assets - a multi-year, expensive process. She asked for a projected timeline for the stewardship plan's development. Mr. McLeod estimated that with a consultant, the plan could realistically be completed in six to nine months. He noted that since the Parks and Recreation Plan must be finalized by the beginning of the year for grant eligibility, the stewardship plan will likely follow that same accelerated timeline to leverage economies of scale.

Mr. Hetrick emphasized that the economic viability of sustainability initiatives is a crucial component of the plan's success. He observed that while CIP projects do not always have a direct financial return on investment, the stewardship plan should aim to find alternatives that are both environmentally right and economically responsible. Mr. McLeod agreed, noting that there will be times when the most sustainable option is the right choice regardless of whether it is the cheapest alternative.

Mr. Carlock inquired about the procurement process for the planning consultants. Ms. Roediger explained that the City will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) through the "Mitten" statewide database to reach local planning firms across Michigan. She anticipated receiving approximately five or six proposals, which the staff will narrow down to the top three for an interview process unless a single proposal clearly outshines the others. Mr. McLeod added that because both he and Ms. Roediger previously worked as consultants, they are well-positioned to evaluate these proposals from a professional perspective.

Discussed

[2026-0048](#)

2026 Zoning Discussion

- a. Development Intensity
- b. Annual Administrative Amendments

Ms. Roediger introduced the results of the 2026 Planning and Zoning priority survey, noting that the purpose was to establish a high-level general idea of the most important topics for the upcoming joint planning efforts. Based on the survey data, the top two priorities for implementing the recently adopted 2025 Master Plan involve updating the zoning ordinance to permit certain types of attached housing units and refreshing the City's architectural design standards. Ms. Roediger emphasized that the housing initiative aims to increase variety - specifically missing middle options - without increasing the overall residential density of surrounding neighborhoods. Staff will also collaborate with local architects to update the architectural guidelines, which are nearly 15 to 20 years old, to ensure high-quality development that enhances community character.

The survey also highlighted data centers as a significant zoning topic for the coming year. Regarding development intensity, Ms. Roediger noted that the 2025 Master Plan reaffirmed the city's commitment to existing density limits, and staff continues to vet developer requests for variances or Planned Unit Developments to ensure they provide a legitimate public benefit. She detailed how the City has already overhauled the Flex Business District by reducing

building heights, increasing setbacks from residential neighbors, and requiring additional open space following past controversies with specific projects.

Environmental preservation remains a core focus, with the City increasing the tree preservation requirement from 37% to 40% and expanding this standard to apply City-wide rather than just to a small fraction of properties. Additionally, staff is preparing housekeeping amendments to address nonconforming lots and eliminate loopholes in the densest residential districts. To support these efforts, Mr. McLeod developed an interactive residential development map that allows users to calculate the average density of any neighborhood or custom-drawn area to ensure new projects are compatible with the surrounding environment. Ms. Roediger concluded by noting that the era of massive housing booms from the 1980s and 1990s is over, and the remaining undeveloped land in the City is being handled with extra caution to respect natural features.

Ms. Roediger and Mr. McLeod presented the Density Explorer, a GIS-based interactive tool designed to provide granular data on residential development throughout the City. Ms. Roediger encouraged the boards to utilize the tool when reviewing future development proposals to ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhood character and to verify that density is not being inadvertently increased.

Mr. McLeod demonstrated the tool's various data layers, explaining that it allows for analysis at the neighborhood level, the section level, and the subdivision level. At the neighborhood level, as established during the Master Plan process, the tool shows broad metrics such as the Adams neighborhood currently averaging two units per acre. Users can also view data for every individual section, such as Section 1 in the northeast, which maintains a lower density of 0.86 units per acre. The explorer function allows users to click on specific property points or draw custom boundaries to calculate the average density of any group of subdivisions, moving beyond static charts to provide accessible information to residents and staff. Mr. McLeod noted that this data was previously tucked away but is now being integrated into a tool for daily staff use and Planning Commission reviews.

Ms. Mungioli raised concerns regarding the potential for data center development on Brownfield sites, particularly on the City's east side. She questioned how the City could proactively regulate such facilities to prevent developers from claiming property rights issues after investing heavily in capped sites. Mr. McLeod clarified that while the Density Explorer reflects what is currently in the ground, the Property Hub should be used to see allowed zoning uses. He acknowledged that showing allowed density versus actual built density would be a valuable future addition to the tool. Ms. Mungioli advocated for highly restrictive zoning standards specifically for data centers to safeguard community character while respecting legal property rights. She noted that she refrained from answering the survey because she felt critical issues like data centers could not be properly ranked when they are singular, high-priority concerns that could lead to requests for zoning changes based on high investment costs.

Ms. Roediger transitioned the discussion to the next topic, noting that they would address data centers following the conclusion of comments regarding residential density and intensity.

Ms. Mungioli inquired if the City was considering the complete removal of the four-story height allowance currently permitted on some lots.

Ms. Roediger responded that such an amendment had not been proposed but could be reviewed if that was the desired direction. She explained that the four-story option is restricted to a very small number of sites, requires a minimum lot acreage, and is a conditional use. She noted that this allows the Planning Commission discretion to review the potential impacts of site-specific proposals.

Ms. Mungioli expressed interest in understanding the impact of reducing the maximum height to three stories regardless of lot size. She specifically cited the Bordine and Twist Drill sites as locations where a four-story building would be a challenge.

Ms. Roediger noted that three-story buildings can be economically challenging for developers. She explained that from a code standpoint, three stories often act as a "loss leader" because the construction requirements and elevator costs are high, while the return on investment is lower than that of a four-story building.

Ms. Mungioli stated she would prefer developers be restricted to single-family residential on those lots rather than allowing a four-story building in the middle of the City for the sake of developer profit. She reiterated her interest in finding out the impact of implementing such a change.

Mr. Dettloff inquired regarding the "breaking point" for residential density, asking when the City would effectively be "full" and without space for new houses or multi-story buildings. He questioned if this point might be reached in 10 or 20 years.

Ms. Roediger responded that it is difficult to provide a specific number, noting that while the City is nearly built out and few "easy pieces" of land remain, redevelopment remains a constant option. She stressed that the City does not want to shut down redevelopment opportunities, particularly for underutilized parcels or older shopping centers, as staying stagnant can cause a community to fall behind. She stated that the goal is to balance compatible and thoughtful redevelopment rather than declaring the City "closed for business".

Mayor Barnett noted that the rate of development has already tapered off. He suggested that future growth will likely come from the assimilation of smaller acreage - such as a long-time resident finally selling a 13-acre plot - rather than massive developments on large, open tracks of land or golf courses.

Ms. Roediger added that opportunities for residential growth often arise from the

sale of schools or places of worship that close their doors. She emphasized that a conscious effort has been made to ensure such properties are planned to be compatible with surrounding residential densities, ensuring any future development matches the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Carlock requested that Planning Manager Chris McLeod display the Hampton area on the map to illustrate what a high-density area looks like. Ms. Roediger explained that density is represented by the legend, with darker orange indicating higher density. Mr. McLeod stated that density can range from two to three units per acre up to 10 to 15 units per acre, depending on the housing type and building proximity. He used the Legacy development as an example, noting that while it falls in the five to 10 units per acre range and may appear large, it is not considered high density in the broader planning context. Mr. Carlock observed that density is relative, noting that while such developments may not be dense compared to New York City, they are considered more dense for Rochester Hills.

Ms. Mungioli raised a concern regarding property assembly, specifically when a developer acquires multiple neighboring large-lot properties to create a larger development. She questioned what options the City has when 13 acres are combined with others to reach 40 acres. Ms. Roediger clarified that from a density standpoint, any new development would still be restricted by the existing zoning of the surrounding area, such as R-2 or R-3. She cited the Walton Oaks neighborhood as an example where the density remained compatible with its surroundings.

Ms. Mungioli expressed concern about the potential for larger subdivisions returning to areas between Dequindre and John R, where many homes currently sit on large lots. Ms. Roediger reassured the group that these areas would not see large multi-story apartment buildings; rather, any redevelopment would consist of single-family homes compatible with the surrounding neighborhood character.

Ms. Mungioli inquired if staff was monitoring the activities of local Catholic churches, noting there are five in the immediate area and reports suggest one or more may be impacted by future changes. She stressed the importance of keeping a close watch on these specific properties. Ms. Roediger explained that a conscious decision was made to maintain residential zoning for such sites. This ensures that if a place of worship moves out, it cannot be replaced by a high-assembly use, such as a theater.

Mr. McLeod addressed the complexities of property assembly, noting that it significantly increases development costs. He stated that developers often use these high acquisition costs to pressure the City for increased density. He emphasized that the City must remain firm in its zoning designations, such as R-1 or R-2, to ensure any new development aligns with the Master Plan's vision. He further commented that development interest never truly ends, as new proposals continue to emerge even when a community feels built out.

Mayor Barnett remarked that development interest only stops when a

community loses its appeal-specifically if it becomes unsafe, schools decline, or parks are poorly maintained. He stated that ongoing interest from developers is a sign of the community's inherent value and success. He noted that while managing this success is a challenge, it is preferable to having no development interest at all.

Mr. McLeod added that after open land is exhausted, developers continue to seek opportunities because the community is a highly desirable place where they know they can sell homes.

Ms. Mungoli questioned if the City's density requirements correlate with a minimum threshold for affordable housing. Ms. Roediger noted that this query served as a transition to the next agenda item regarding affordability. Ms. Mungoli then indicated that Ms. Neubauer had a question to raise before the discussion moved forward.

Ms. Neubauer stated that the Master Plan process delivered a clear message that the community does not want more density. She suggested that the City should consider a reduction of density and capping building heights, noting that it is not her job to ensure a developer maximizes profit at the expense of citizens who desire lower density. She remarked that if three-story buildings are more expensive and difficult to build, that could serve as a useful standard to discourage higher density and force developers toward two-story structures. Regarding state legislation, she expressed concern over potential state-mandated affordability regulations and asked what could be done to prevent the state from imposing high-density projects on the community.

Mayor Barnett addressed the group, acknowledging the common perception that the city is being "built up," but he countered this by stating the City has purchased ten times more green space and park space in recent years than it has turned into buildable property. He emphasized that the number of new homes being built is extremely low compared to neighboring communities and that the administration has consistently worked to make the city less dense. He provided demographic data showing the City grew by 7% from 2010 to 2020 and noted that the non-white population has increased by approximately 13,000 residents since 2000.

In discussing the demographics of the community, Mayor Barnett pointed out that Rochester Hills is an older community with an average age of 43.8. He contrasted this with neighboring Dearborn, where the average age is 26, to illustrate the city's unique position as an aging population group. He identified housing affordability as a top national concern but noted the local tension where residents support affordability in theory but oppose higher-density options like manufactured home communities.

Mayor Barnett voiced his opposition to a blanket ban on four-story buildings, arguing that maintaining them as a conditional use provides the Council with necessary control and options. He cited an example of an area he would like to see redeveloped into something that meets community needs, even if that includes a four-story proposal. He concluded by stating that the City is planting

more trees annually than it removes, noting that the only years where the numbers were close coincided with the development of parks like Innovation Hills.

Mr. Blair requested to clarify the definition of affordable housing within the context of Rochester Hills. He noted that the standard formula considers housing affordable if it costs 30% or less of the gross median income. Based on a median income of \$120,000 in Rochester Hills, he calculated that affordable housing would equate to approximately \$3,000 per month. He stated that with current interest rates, this translates to a property value between \$450,000 and \$500,000. He emphasized that affordable housing in this community is a sliding scale and does not mean a home priced under \$300,000. He added that residents must be cognizant of the fact that it is not possible for someone on a very low fixed income to move into the City.

Ms. Mungoli thanked Mr. Blair for the calculation but noted that she views affordable housing more through the lens of a renter rather than an owner. She expressed interest in understanding what the affordability formula would look like specifically for rental units. Mr. Blair questioned whether the formula for affordable housing - calculating a percentage of income - remains the same for rental costs versus mortgage payments. Ms. Roediger confirmed that the formula is the same, as it measures what an individual is paying for their housing relative to their income, regardless of whether they rent or own.

Ms. Mungoli brought up subsidized housing and the impact of PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) housing programs, specifically mentioning Danish Village and other similar developments. Mr. Blair expressed significant concern regarding companies utilizing PILOT programs for Section 8 housing. He noted that one project had recently fallen apart and mentioned that he had received emails from residents expressing disappointment with how another project had unfolded. He stated that these situations are difficult for residents and uncomfortable for elected officials to manage. He inquired if there were ways the City could curtail these programs or have more control over how they are implemented.

Mayor Barnett addressed the legislative constraints on municipal tax bases, specifically highlighting the impact of the veterans exemption. He noted that this exemption is growing annually and allows some veterans in million-dollar homes to claim tax-free status due to their disability ratings. He stated that municipalities are working together to address programs like the PILOT housing initiative, which often involves the community's highest users of services. He described certain exploitations of these programs as a "garbage play" but clarified that because they are mandated through MSHDA (Michigan State Housing Development Authority), the City cannot create separate rules and must rely on advocacy groups like the Michigan Municipal League (MML) to lobby for legislative improvements.

Regarding community density, Mayor Barnett referenced a recent survey showing that density and intensity remain top concerns for residents. He asserted that the City has spent the last decade implementing policies to curtail

and reign in the rapid growth seen in the early 2000s. He pointed out a unique challenge involving the Rochester Community Schools, which lose students annually because the City is an older, more prosperous community with fewer young families. He noted that school funding is largely tied to per-pupil state aid, creating a conflict where the district may require more density to remain viable. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a diverse housing stock-including apartments, condos, and senior living facilities-to protect the City from the economic vulnerabilities seen in communities with uniform housing stock, such as Berkeley or Royal Oak. He reiterated that while he hears residents say they want "no more apartments," providing safe and generally affordable options for various demographics is essential for long-term stability.

Transitioning to the topic of data centers, Mayor Barnett observed that these facilities have replaced past infrastructure discussions, such as the 2020 focus on preparing for driverless vehicles. He shared insights from discussions with the mayors of Santa Clara, California, and Mesa, Arizona, noting that while Santa Clara has 57 data centers, Mesa recently adopted zoning amendments to establish standards for sound, water, and energy usage to protect neighborhoods.

The Mayor announced that the administration would propose a six-month moratorium to the City Council later in February to allow for comprehensive research. He cautioned that the City cannot legally eliminate data centers entirely - comparing them to billboards or cell towers - but must instead "thoughtfully, artfully, and craftfully" determine suitable locations and boundaries. He noted that data centers are unique economic entities that require massive infrastructure but create few long-term jobs, often described as "the next generation of economic development". The proposed pause is intended to ensure the City can set acreage limits and minimize environmental impacts without facing litigation.

Mr. Dettloff inquired if any members had personally visited a data center or if there were local facilities available for a site visit. He noted that without firsthand knowledge, it is difficult for officials to accurately address constituent concerns regarding these developments, whereas they can easily provide information on schools or other familiar infrastructure.

Mayor Barnett stated that he had not personally visited one but mentioned that cities in the south, such as those discussed with the mayors of Santa Clara and Phoenix, have a high concentration of them. He noted that data centers vary significantly in scale, with some requiring hundreds of acres while others occupy as few as three.

Ms. Roediger shared that a mapping website for Michigan data centers exists and offered to distribute it to the group. She clarified that while massive "super sites" are currently dominating the news, data centers have existed in Michigan for decades. She reported that there are currently 60 data centers in the metro Detroit area, including facilities in Auburn Hills and Troy, many of which have been operational for over 20 years.

Mayor Barnett observed that these facilities are likely not open for public tours due to the high-security nature of the work they perform.

Mr. Blair elaborated on the significant shift in data center technology, explaining that modern AI data centers are entirely different from the unremarkable buildings of the past three decades. He noted that while older data centers were designed to be visually discreet, new facilities running AI workloads feature a density of "compute" - the actual processing brains of the system - that is far more concentrated.

Mr. Blair used a manufacturing analogy, comparing the difference to a factory producing sewing machines versus one producing Humvees; while the building footprint might be similar, the intensity of the infrastructure inside is vastly different. He warned that while a traditional data center, such as those found along Northwestern Highway, might not appear impactful, AI-centric data centers in places like Silicon Valley are audible from blocks away. He described the cooling requirements for these new facilities as massive, featuring rows of air conditioning units the size of 18 motor homes. He emphasized that the City's focus should be on the specific impacts of these high-intensity AI facilities rather than outdated models.

Mayor Barnett highlighted a significant concern regarding the potential for state-level preemption of municipal authority. He noted that Governor Whitmer has been a vocal supporter of making Michigan a "pro-data center state," viewing the industry as the next generation of the manufacturing economy. He warned that if municipalities become too restrictive or uncooperative, the State might intervene to usurp local control, as has occurred with other legislative matters. The Mayor emphasized that the City is monitoring the actions of neighboring communities to ensure its own policies remain "mindful" and defensible.

Ms. Mungoli raised questions regarding the long-term redevelopment of data center sites. She expressed concern that if these facilities - which often involve 10-acre "sprawling" buildings - become obsolete in 20 years, they could become environmental liabilities or "next-generation Brownfields". She inquired whether the City could implement structural requirements to ensure these buildings are adaptable for future uses, such as conversion into affordable housing, similar to the redevelopment seen at the Chrysler Tech Center.

Mayor Barnett introduced the emerging issue of drone delivery, noting that Amazon has already begun operations in neighboring areas. He reported that Amazon currently operates approximately 30 minutes before sunrise and 30 minutes after sunset, using drones capable of carrying packages weighing up to eight pounds. He noted that a single "Amazon-hungry neighbor" could receive up to 15 deliveries per day, creating a new set of municipal challenges. The Mayor explained that the City's ability to regulate these operations is severely limited. Because the drones typically hover at 10 feet to drop packages rather than landing, the City cannot easily regulate them through land-use laws. Furthermore, these drones travel at speeds of up to 60 miles per hour, posing potential public safety concerns, particularly if they interfere with emergency

drones used for tasks like searching for patients with dementia.

He concluded by stating that while these technologies - including drones and data centers - were not present in the last Master Plan, the City's team is working to find a regulatory path that protects the "residential culture and climate" as much as possible. He reiterated that simply banning these services or facilities is not a legally viable option, making thoughtful integration essential.

Ms. Mungoli inquired if the City could restrict drone delivery operations to standard working hours, specifically from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.. Mayor Barnett clarified that such regulations fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rather than local municipal authority. He noted that any negotiation regarding delivery hours would require a regional response where multiple communities band together to address the FAA, similar to previous municipal advocacy regarding state firework laws. The Mayor reported that while approximately 200 drone deliveries are currently dispatched from Pontiac daily, the goal is to reach 2,500 daily deliveries within the next year, representing a potential 10 to 20-fold increase in activity.

Closing the discussion on new technology and development challenges, Mayor Barnett suggested that the group shift its focus to the positive outcomes of their work. He reminded the members that Rochester Hills has been ranked as the best place to live in Michigan and among the top ten in the country. He highlighted a key metric: 95% of residents would recommend living in the City to their friends and neighbors, giving Rochester Hills the highest net promoter score for a city in the country.

Mayor Barnett invited each member of the City Council and Planning Commission to share one project or development they are particularly proud of. He emphasized that despite common complaints regarding traffic or snow removal, the high resident satisfaction suggests that the Council, Planning Commission, and administration are succeeding in their leadership. He then turned the meeting back to Sarah Roediger for final comments.

Vice Chairperson Brnabic addressed the ongoing debate regarding building height, specifically responding to developer claims that three- or four-story structures are necessary for financial feasibility. She noted that while developers naturally seek the highest return on investment, the Planning Commission must maintain strict regulations to prevent projects from becoming "ridiculous" in scale. She expressed a cautionary view on relying solely on conditional use status for height allowances. While the Commission has discretion, Vice Chairperson Brnabic emphasized that their hands are often tied by existing ordinances and regulations. She cited the Barnes and Noble property as an instance where the Planning Commission's authority was limited, requiring City Council intervention to resolve the issue. She argued that "high height" is not the vision of the community, stating she has never encountered a resident asking for more four-story buildings in the City. She praised the Flex Business (FB) ordinance and the associated moratorium for providing better structure through property minimums and overlays, but she maintained that height remains a point of contention. Reflecting on the Brooklands district, Vice

Chairperson Brnabic commented that the new three-story building there feels "out of place" and "hideous" to some residents. She suggested that a two-story requirement would have been more appropriate and harmonious with the surrounding area, reiterating that financial feasibility for developers should not override the visual character and long-term vision of the community.

Mayor Barnett expressed respect for the concerns regarding height but cautioned against making blanket statements that could limit long-term planning. He referenced the City of Troy, specifically noting that he is "absolutely opposed" to some of the "awful uses of height, depth and density" seen along Rochester Road, such as storage units that feel awkward and out of place. However, he argued that while residents might say they do not want "higher and taller," many do not realize that the highest buildings in the city - such as high schools, hospitals, and churches-already reach four, five, or even eight stories. He noted that institutions like Oakland University, the local mosque, and several Catholic churches feature tall parapets or bell towers that exist throughout the City without public outcry.

Mayor Barnett emphasized the importance of maintaining options and being able to make decisions based on site-specific proposals. He noted that of the 10,000 sites in the city, only about a dozen could even qualify for four-story buildings under current regulations. He stated that the City Council maintains the ability to deny a project through conditional use if it "doesn't feel right on this spot," similar to how drive-throughs are regulated. He concluded by stating it is unwise for long-term planning to say the City will "never" look at certain types of development, provided the appropriate caveats and standards remain in place.

Ms. Roediger noted the time and proposed concluding the meeting on a positive note by discussing projects of which the members are proud. She asked if there were any remaining topics the administration should investigate and encouraged members to reach out to her or Mr. McLeod with further questions.

Ms. Neubauer expressed significant pride in the development of inclusive housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Rochester Hills. She highlighted two specific projects, Walton Oaks and Auburn Oaks (Angara Oaks), which provide neuro-inclusive neighborhoods for a group of people often overlooked. Ms. Roediger remarked that these projects were complex, multi-year efforts that initially faced significant challenges. Mayor Barnett added that these developments likely received more criticism during their early stages than any other city project. Ms. Neubauer admitted that she was initially a strong critic on the panel, frequently sending the developers back to ensure legal requirements and community standards were met. She concluded that although it was a long and difficult road, the developers eventually "did it right," resulting in successful projects that will benefit the community for years to come.

Ms. Denstaedt expressed excitement regarding a forthcoming retail establishment located across from Lowe's. She noted that the project involved the removal of an unattractive building and emphasized that the new development will now resemble the aesthetic of Rochester Road south of South

Boulevard.

Mr. Dettloff cited the Brooklands redevelopment as his preferred project, describing it as a "classic redevelopment".

Mr. Struzik highlighted the new commercial buildings at the northeast corner of Rochester and Avon Roads. He noted that despite initial public hesitation, the development now provides desirable locations for coffee and shopping.

Ms. Mungoli discussed the Winchester Mall redevelopment, noting that it has remained uniform over the years even as tenants have changed and the retention pond was filled in. She contrasted this with the Amazon Fresh building and stressed the need for updated design standards to ensure such uniformity is maintained during future redevelopments. Ms. Roediger and the Mayor briefly discussed the status of a specific permit at that location that was expected to have expired.

Mr. Blair expressed satisfaction with the improved traffic flow in front of Yates Cider Mill, noting that the area no longer experiences the daily backups that occurred previously.

Mr. Carlock concluded by mentioning the "fish art" and murals, with a suggestion of bringing similar art projects to Rochester Road in the future.

Mr. Limberg expressed support for the double roundabouts.

Mr. Gallina highlighted the Serra Ford dealership, noting that it is harmonious with other dealerships and features a significant improvement in traffic flow. He remarked that the new facility is an attractive addition to a high-traffic area.

Mr. Carlock expressed satisfaction with the corner of Rochester Rd. and Wabash. He observed that former vacancies have been replaced by new businesses, such as a cigar bar, Tee-Time, and a Pilates studio, which have refreshed the area's appearance.

Mr. Hetrick reiterated his support for the Walton Oaks and Angara Oaks developments, describing them as terrific projects.

Ms. Mannino praised the design and value added by developments near the Livernois Road and Hamlin Road roundabout. She specifically mentioned Breckenridge and Legacy, noting that their high-quality design has increased property values in that vicinity.

Mr. Skelcy expressed his enthusiasm for the City's roundabouts. He concluded by reflecting on his experience as a new member of the government, stating that the process has been a positive, eye-opening experience. He suggested that more citizens should observe these meetings to understand how city employees and officials prioritize the community's best interests.

Mr. Blair shared an anecdote regarding the Sanyo Machine Corporation building at the corner of Rochester and Avon Roads. He recalled that several years ago,

the building appeared unappealing due to rusty barbed-wire fencing. After coordinating with former Building Department Director Scott Cope, the barbed wire was removed. Mr. Blair noted that the building, originally constructed in 1947 with blue stone, now possesses a "retro charm". He emphasized that viewing a property through a different lens or making small tweaks can result in significant positive changes.

Mr. Christ expressed support for the development of Innovation Hills.

Mr. McLeod expressed excitement about the City leading by example. He stated that when the City can point to its own successful projects, it becomes easier to encourage developers to follow similar high standards.

Ms. Roediger identified The Village of Rochester Hills as one of the City's "jewels". She noted that while the development was born out of controversy and a consent judgment, it has become a premier destination.

Mayor Barnett concluded by expressing his gratitude for the partnership between the City Council, the Planning Commission, and the administration. He commended the Planning Commission members for volunteering their time to make the community better and noted the team's "crazy awesome track record" in executing successful projects.

Discussed

NEXT MEETING DATE

- February 9, 2026, 7 p.m., Regular City Council Meeting
- February 17, 2026, 7 p.m., Planning Commission Meeting (Cancelled).

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no business to come before the Planning Commission and City Council, and upon motion by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, Vice Chairperson Brnabic adjourned the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

*Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission*

*Jason Carlock, President
Rochester Hills City Council*

Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary