



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Planning Commission

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Chairperson Deborah Brnabic, Vice Chairperson Greg Hooper
Members: Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick, Marvie
Neubauer, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver
Youth Representatives: Janelle Hayes and Siddh Sheth

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

In compliance with the provisions of Michigan's Open Meetings Act, Public Act No. 267 of 1976, as amended, notice is hereby given that THE ROCHESTER HILLS PLANNING COMMISSION would hold a SPECIAL WORK SESSION on Tuesday, April 15, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Auditorium at the Rochester Hills Municipal Offices, 1000 Rochester Hills Dr., Rochester Hills, Michigan 48309 to discuss the City's Master Land Use Plan along with the City's consultants Giffels Webster.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Brnabic called the Planning Commission Special Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m., Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

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

Others Present:

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

Chairperson Brnabic welcomed attendees to the Special Work Session. She noted that if anyone would like to speak during Public Comment or under the discussion item to fill out a comment card, and hand that card to Ms. MacDonald. She noted that all comments and questions would be limited to three minutes per person.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

DISCUSSION

[2025-0176](#)

Master Plan 2025

(Giffels Webster's Goals, Objectives and Future Land Use Discussion memorandum dated April 9, 2025, Public Comment received, Planning Commission Worksession Minutes of 2/18/25, 12/10/24, 11/19/24, 10/15/24,

9/17/24, 7/16/24, 5/21/24, 6/18/24, 3/19/24, Planning Commission Regular Minutes of 12/10/24, and Planning Commission-City Council Joint Meeting Minutes of 11/18/24 and 1/29/24 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Present representing the City's Master Plan Consultant, Giffels Webster, was Jill Bahm and Ian Hogg.

Chairperson Brnabic welcomed everyone to the worksession meeting and noted she had received one card for public comment, and she opened the floor for public comment.

Scot Beaton, 655 Bolinger St. - Mr. Beaton said that he likes the new land use categories for the Master Plan and noted that no other municipality does meeting minutes like Rochester Hills. He said that it appears that Millennials really like the color gray in architectural design. With regard to the new gas station at Adams and Walton, he noted that he had asked the question online as to whether the architecture matches the region, and comments came back 50-50. He said with regard to the public hearing tonight on the site condos, he wished that more of them had a neighborhood park like the one proposed so that people have a place to gather. He said that he would also like to see a grand plan for Rochester Road. He said that the board is doing a terrific job and he would like to hear some feedback.

Ms. Roediger stated that next year the City's Master Transportation plan is due to be updated and that would be an appropriate time to discuss the future of Rochester Rd. She said that one of the biggest jobs as part of this process is to convert the Master Plan into a digital format. She commented that there are not a lot of changes and instead more design guidelines incorporated and smaller changes focusing on aesthetic appeal.

Ms. Bahm noted that the challenge is to convert what one normally thinks of as a PDF plan to a more engaging online format, to allow the user to choose their own adventure and focus on the neighborhood where they live. She explained that the goals and objectives are similar to previous plans in that it asks the question what we are trying to accomplish, why, and how to achieve these goals. She mentioned that two objectives were added for preservation and sustainability.

She reviewed the proposed Future Land Use map and noted the changes that were made to the descriptions.

Chairperson Brnabic commented that she did not recall a discussion for allowing duplexes and triplexes along arterial roads, and stated that the discussion went nowhere when it was brought up previously.

Ms. Bahm reminded everyone that the Future Land Use Map and the Master Plan is all about helping establish policies to make land use decisions. She stressed that neither the Map nor the Plan are regulatory; however, they can help guide decision-making.

Chairperson Brnabic stated that developers often tell how their plans coincide with the Master Plan, and her concern is that how things are described in the Master Plan convey a reflection of the vision for the future. She noted that there was mention about clustering homes and reducing setbacks, and she stated that she wants more detail on that.

Ms. Bahm noted that the discussion was about housing variety and types to maintain the character of the city, while not wanting to increase density or overburden areas. She suggested in certain areas to permit a different type of housing similar to the surrounding density.

Ms. Roediger noted that a four-unit attached dwelling takes up less space and saves more trees and woods, maintaining natural views and providing meaningful open space.

Chairperson Brnabic asked for more detail on the idea of meaningful open space.

Ms. Bahm responded that it is not just increasing the setbacks, but providing a natural area that is meaningful, perhaps with a trail, piece of art, or bench.

Commission members discussed opportunities for creating more density by providing a means for clustering homes and reducing setbacks in the Plan, noting that a definition page needs to be added so that it is not a source of confusion.

Ms. Neubauer noted that she doesn't understand the reference to clustering homes by reducing setbacks to maintain open space and said that is vague.

Ms. Roediger drew a sketch for the commissioners of two developments of the same size, one as a single family development layout under conventional zoning, and the second as a complex of duplexes with open space set aside. She pointed out that only the bright yellow areas on the map were calling for attached units, and mentioned including along John R, along Auburn in the Brooklands District, and on the west side of Auburn and Adams adjacent to traditional neighborhoods and not in the middle of neighborhoods. She pointed out that some of the areas already allow this under the MR zoning; however, they need a 10-acre minimum. She stressed it was not to increase density but to maximize space. She added that they heard during the process that people want single floor housing for seniors, and developers like attached condominiums.

Chairperson Brnabic referenced the Joint Meeting noting that care must be taken so that it does not push higher density housing as a connection to affordable housing.

Ms. Neubauer concurred with the discussion that was held at the joint meeting, noting the vocabulary needed to be adjusted to eliminate the words "affordable housing".

Mr. Hetrick commented that the word "attainable" should be in place of

"affordable".

Mr. Struzik stated that \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$700,000 is not attainable housing. He commented that having more diverse options increases the pool for people who can move in, and does not raise the density. He stated that it is a win-win.

Ms. Roediger noted that it will probably not make the price lower.

Ms. Denstaedt commented that the arterial roads are those areas that are more attainable to purchase housing in the city.

Mr. Struzik asked whether this could help a wetland going through development.

Mr. McLeod stated that the Plan does not need to define attainable housing as it cannot dictate the market. He stressed that it would provide a variety of housing opportunities. He mentioned that most people are not going to build a single family home that fronts on a major road.

Mr. Hetrick commented that it is not a matter of affordability, it providing is a mix of housing options that makes sense.

Ms. Neubauer commented that at the Joint Meeting, they were proud of the catchphrase that Rochester Hills does not have to be everything to everybody.

Chairperson Brnabic asked how City Council or the public will view the idea of meaningful open space.

Ms. Roediger responded that the Master Plan will be very graphic.

Ms. Bahm's presentation summarized the proposed changes, noting the following:

- Residential Land Use Categories

- Estate Residential is changed to Open Space Residential, reflecting the natural feel of the existing neighborhoods, found mostly in the northern part of the city, primarily north of the Clinton River. The category includes four areas zoned Rural Estates as well as areas zoned R-1. Many of the older neighborhoods are predominantly 1/2 to one acre in size. No new areas are proposed for this zoning designation as there are few undeveloped parcels sufficient in size for this type of more rural, sprawling development.

- Residential 2, 2.5, 3 and 4 are proposed to change to Suburban Residential. These designations are based on the existing single-family development pattern and permit varying densities of detached single-family development based on the established character of the neighborhood. Lot sizes range from three to four dwelling units per acre, based on existing development patterns.

- Residential 5 is proposed to change to Neighborhood Residential. This land use designation is intended to provide residential areas that accommodate homes on smaller lot sizes with an expectation that these areas may be well-suited to empty-nesters and young professionals looking for more affordable housing, home sites with lower maintenance, and housing within

walking distance of goods, services, and employment centers. These areas support a density of four to six dwelling units per acre, consistent with surrounding residential development. Manufactured housing communities are also included in this category, although no new communities are planned. Land use aligns with Mixed Residential Overlay, R-3, R-4 and R-5 when located along major thoroughfares. Attached dwellings may be appropriate as a transition along major thoroughfares, or to preserve natural features, when the new development meets the density of adjacent neighborhoods.

- Mixed Residential Overlay - Category is removed, some areas are reclassified as Neighborhood Residential.

- Office Related Land Use Categories

- The Office category is removed.
- Changes from the previously-designated "Office" land use areas to Mixed Use include the area around Barclay Circle, along Auburn Road/Crooks, Walton and Brewster, and South Boulevard south of M-59.
- Changes from previously designed "Workplace" and "Technology and Office Image Corridor" land use areas to "Light Industrial/R&D" include that areas between Hamlin Road and M-59, between Hamlin Road and the Clinton River Trail, east of Livernois, and south of M-59 to Auburn Road, between Adams Road and Crooks Road, including the existing development east of Crooks Road.

- Business/Flex-Related Land Use Categories

- The Future Land Use map continues to offer flexibility and includes a Mixed-Use category to accommodate a range of residential, office and commercial uses as standalone uses, or within mixed use buildings or areas. The majority of areas planned for Mixed Use are currently used for commercial uses or have a Flex Business Overlay zoning designation. Mixed Use areas are intended to prevent the expansion of strictly commercial parcels beyond their current boundaries. Mixed Use areas provide responsiveness and incentive for property owners to redevelop older commercial developments.

- Regional Employment Center Land Use Categories

- Interchange replaced by "Regional Commercial". Much of the recent commercial development in this area has taken place west of Adams Road and south of M-59 in the Adams Marketplace development. The large footprint and strip mall style developments are not planned to change, and future land use considerations should focus on the stability, visibility and connectivity of the area.
- Technology, Office and Workplace - Proposed as Light Industrial/R&D. Areas designated Light Industrial are employment development areas, or workplace areas, that serve light industrial and R&D Users. Includes areas along the M-59 corridor where there are high visibility buffers from residential areas, and this category offers opportunities for more intense uses that seek to establish a presence along the M-59 corridor. Areas without direct access to M-59 are primarily developed as office/research/industrial parks and accommodate a variety of users.
- Flex Category - Proposed as Mixed Use - Most of the commercial corridors in the City are included in this land use category. It is envisioned that corridors and intersections away from Rochester Road provide goods and services to the

local neighborhoods. Properties along the Rochester Road corridor will serve the greater community, given the traffic volume and function of this roadway in the region. Housing is also envisioned in mixed use areas, consistent with the development pattern of local neighborhoods.

- Other Land Use Categories

- *Industrial - Proposed for Hybrid Industrial.* Areas planned for industrial uses are appropriate for light industrial land uses that are characterized by light manufacturing operations that are not of sufficient size or scale to negatively impact surrounding non-industrial use areas. Examples of such light industrial uses include bump and paint shops, warehousing and wholesaling, and light assembly operations. In the Hamlin/Avon Landfill area, light industrial is envisioned to be developed consistent with low-impact design features and/or be businesses that focused on or support, sustainability, energy generation and/or recreation.

- *Special Purpose - Proposed as Institutional/Campus:* This land use category includes colleges (Oakland University and Rochester University) and institutional uses such as Ascension Providence Hospital. The City's DPS facility is included in this category as well.

- *Public Recreation/Open Space - is proposed as Public Recreation/Open Space.* The city's publicly owned parks and trail facilities are included in this land use category. In the Hamlin/Avon Landfill area, lands designated for public recreation and open space may include privately-owned recreational facilities when connections such as shared-use paths are provided to adjacent public recreation facilities. Two new parcels were added along Rochester Road between Avon and the Clinton River and another between Hamlin and Eddington.

Ms. Bahm commented that the density is not increasing, and it is just mimicking what is adjacent to it.

Ms. Roediger stressed that the Commission should not get bogged down by what is there today and should think about what they would want for a future use in each location.

Chairperson Brnabic asked if Council will see a draft moving forward and have time to review it.

Ms. Roediger suggested that a Special Meeting could be held on June 3 with Council invited.

Chairperson Brnabic stated that she had a few questions on the neighborhood descriptions relative to density, and mentioned the Avondale and Rochester East Neighborhoods.

Ms. Roediger responded that the R-4 current zoning allows four units per acre.

Ms. Denstaedt asked if there was a way to emphasize the future aspect of it and not what is there now.

Mr. Hetrick commented that this is consistent with what the Commission has

been doing, and will be consistent in the future to maintain the integrity of the city.

Chairperson Brnabic asked about reducing setbacks for cluster homes and asked if it would explain that it would take a process to do so.

Ms. Bahm responded that there would be a flexibility of dimensional standards.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further discussion for the Work Session, the Work session was adjourned at 6:50 p.m. The Planning Commission then reconvened for the Regular Meeting after a short break.

*Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission*

Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary