



Annual Report

June 1, 2010 - May 31, 2011

City of Auburn Hills Planning Commission

Under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, the Planning Commission is required to provide an annual report to the City Council. This report is intended to coincide with the City Council's review of the City budget.

This report discusses the following topics:

- Summary of the Commission's operations during the past 12 months
- The status of any on-going planning activities
- Recommendations to the City Council related to planning/development and funding

Commission Operations

The Commission is governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the City's Zoning Ordinance. During the 12 month period starting on June 1, 2010 and ending on May 31, 2011, the Commission's membership was as follows:

Greg Ouellette, Chairperson
 Veronica Mitchell, Vice-Chairperson
 Cheryl Verbeke, Secretary
 Sam Beidoun
 Chauncey Hitchcock
 Robert Kittle (City Council liaison)
 Bob Pierce
 Lacey Salerno
 Wade Spurlin

During this time period, the Commission held 18 meetings and recommendations were made to the City Council on 26 development related items, which was up from the year before as shown in the table below.

Measurable	Y2007-2008	Y2008-2009	Y2009-2010	Y2010-2011
Meetings	10	17	10	18
Site Plans	5	10	2	6
Special Land Use Permits	6	8	6	12
Tree Removal Permits	4	3	1	4
Planned Unit Developments	2	1	0	0
Rezoning	3	2	1	3
Text Amendments	0	4	8	1
Total Projects	20	28	18	26

Steve Cohen, Director of Community Development provides staff support to the Commission. Mr. Cohen has served the Commission since October 4, 1999. He is both registered as a Professional Community Planner (PCP) with the State of Michigan and certified as a professional planner (AICP) with the American Planning Association. He has Bachelor and Master Degrees in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University.

Notable Commission Items

1. Development Applications

Notable projects reviewed by the Commission were the following:

- North Auburn Hills Baptist Church - LED sign
- Golden Triangle Centre – 10,120 sq. ft. retail strip mall
- Kensington Community Church – 21,306 sq. ft. multi-purpose facility
- Takata Headquarters - 23,228 sq. ft. addition and rezoning from B-2 to T&R district
- Subway Sub Shop in the Downtown – outside seating
- The Shoppes at Baldwin Square – 21,462 sq. ft. retail strip mall
- City Grind Skate Park – recreational facility
- Great Lakes Crossing Mall – remerchandising signs
- The River Church – temporary event
- Red Martin Resorts – rezoning from R-2 to B-2 district
- Hampton Inn – 47,556 sq. ft., 80-room hotel
- Holiday Inn Express / Hampton Inn Condominium – two unit condominium
- Dow Automotive Systems – outside storage
- Legend Valve (Wal-Mart site) – rezoning from B-2 to I-1 district
- Pixley Funeral Home – 3,500 sq. ft. facility

2. Medical Marihuana – Comprehensive Study and Text Amendment

In June 2010, the City Council issued a 120-day moratorium addressing medical marihuana and charged the Commission with the task of reviewing the City's current ordinances related to issue and report back with a recommendation. The Planning Commission reviewed the subject in detail on June 30, 2010, August 11, 2010, and September 14, 2010. After extensive review, the Commission recommended that the City Council adopt a text amendment which would ban medical marihuana and any other activity, conduct, use, or venture in the City of Auburn Hills that is contrary to federal, state, or local laws. The City Council accepted their recommendation to ban medical marihuana on October 4, 2010.

3. Award and Presentation at Michigan APA Conference

In October 2010, the City of Auburn Hills was honored with the prestigious *Outstanding Planning Project Award* for the Riverwalk Master Plan at the Michigan APA Conference in Detroit. Shawn Keenan, Water Resources Coordinator accepted the award on behalf of the community. Commissioners Beidoun, Ouellette, Spurlin, and Verbeke attended the Award Ceremony. Later in the Conference, Mr. Cohen provided a presentation to his peers related to the problems with the Michigan Medical Marihuana Law and its impact on municipalities.

4. Planning Outreach

The American Planning Association (APA) designated October 2010 as National Community Planning Month as a way to highlight the role of planners in the development of communities. At the Commission's request, the Council adopted a resolution proclaiming October 2010 as Community Planning Month in the City of Auburn Hills. In addition, Member Verbeke met with a class at the local school to discuss city planning and her role as a Commissioner.

5. Tri-City Sustainability Plan - Joint Partnership

In late 2010, the cities of Auburn Hills, Rochester Hills, and Rochester worked collaboratively in developing and submitting a proposal to Oakland County to create a Tri-City Sustainability Plan designed to help pursue the triple bottom line of sustainability (i.e., economic, social and environmental issues). The idea was in response to a Request for Proposal offered by Oakland County. It will identify and prioritize efforts needed for advancing local sustainability through the development of goals, strategies, actions, and timelines. The planning process began in January 2011 and is expected to conclude sometime in June 2012. Oakland County is contributing

\$50,000 in contracted professional planning services and \$20,000 in staff resources to this effort. Other than staff time, no financial commitment is required from any of the municipalities. Mr. Keenan serves on the project's Sustainability Steering Committee and Ronald Melchert, Director of Public Services, Chairperson Ouellette, Council Member Kittle are serving on the Sustainability Advisory Board. Work groups will soon be formed to help further identify goals and metrics. The first of the three open house meetings was held on June 2, 2011, which gave residents, businesses and others the opportunity to provide input to identify and rank key features important to its residents and businesses.

6. Promoting Active Communities Award

In February 2011, the City of Auburn Hills received the *Promoting Active Communities (PAC) Silver Award* from the Michigan Fitness Foundation, the Department of Community Health, Michigan State University, and the Prevention Research Center of Michigan. The Silver Award recognizes the City's efforts and its significant progress in creating a more active, livable, and economically viable community. Auburn Hills was one of only 30 communities in Michigan to earn an award from the PAC program. Staff plans to work together to use the assessment as a springboard to further encourage and promote active living in the City in an effort to reach the PAC's Gold or Platinum level in the future. The following City staff members worked on the program: Karen Adcock, Senior Citizen Services Director, Stephanie Carroll, Coordinator of Community Relations and Legislative Affairs, Brian Marzolf, Parks and Recreation Director, and Mr. Cohen.

7. North Squirrel Roadway Study

In Spring 2011, the Commission reviewed the long-range plan for the Squirrel Road corridor roadway improvements as directed by the City Council. In combination with City staff, several informational meetings were organized with property owners in April 2011; with a final public meeting held on April 20, 2011. The plan will help guide road improvement projects, land use plans, and development projects along the corridor. Peter Auger, City Manager was instrumental in leading the public meetings. The result of the public discussion was that the whole corridor would not be improved at once, but phased as monies became available with a focus on improving intersections. Road improvements are expected to be phased between Walton Boulevard and Tienken Road by initially constructing three lanes with the future plan to widen to five lanes when traffic warrants. Traffic studies showed no need to build the road wider than three lanes between Tienken Road and Dutton Road. A narrow boulevard, in locations where the center turn lane was not needed, was also presented to help beautify that particular section of roadway. The plan was developed to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely in the future.

8. Auburn Road Corridor Planning Study

In Spring 2011, the Commission began discussions on a vision for the property along Auburn Road at the periphery of the Downtown core. A brainstorming workshop was held on March 15, 2011 and a walking tour was held on April 5, 2011. The study has been broken down into two study areas. The first area called "East Auburn Road" is from Juniper east to Adams Road. The second area called "West Auburn Road" is from the Clinton River west to I-75. The Commission intends to finish and provide the results of the study to the City Council prior to year-end.

9. Staff Training

Mr. Cohen attended the Michigan APA Conference in Detroit in October 2010 and the National APA Conference in Boston in April 2011. AICP planners, like Mr. Cohen, are required to obtain professional development training in order to maintain their credentials. AICP planners must earn a minimum of 32 CM credits (1 hour = 1 CM credit) within a designated two-year reporting period. A minimum of 1.5 credits must be on the topic of ethics, and another 1.5 credits must be on the topic of current planning law. Mr. Cohen has obtained 83.50 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2010 and December 31, 2011.

10. Commission Training

Training is a high priority for the Commission and City Council. Members are faced with an enormous responsibility to help guide the physical development of the community. Poor decisions could lead the City into costly litigation. The Commission has benefited greatly over the years from training; whether they are new members who want to learn about planning, or veteran members who need to keep up to date with changes in the law and planning practices.

Member Spurlin attended the Michigan APA Conference in Detroit in October 2010. Several members also attended seminars locally offered by Oakland County and Michigan State University Extension.

The Commission has seven members (Beidoun, Hitchcock, Mitchell, Ouellette, Pierce, Salerno, and Spurlin) who are certified as "Citizen Planners" by Michigan State University Extension, three of which have received a Master designation. The members were required to take seven courses related to land use planning to obtain the certification. To receive the Master Citizen Planner designation additional course work was required.

Auburn Hills has been involved with a very limited number of development-related lawsuits over the past 12 years; which is mainly attributed to a proactive Commissioner training program and well-trained staff. It is our understanding that this record of accomplishment has helped the City lower its general liability insurance rates over the years, which saves taxpayers money.

On-Going Planning Activities Through May 31, 2012

1. Complete the Auburn Road Corridor Planning Study
2. Complete the first generation of amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and City Code for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (EVI). Work to plan for private and public EVI installation.
3. Review of land use around Oakland University, near Walton Boulevard and impact of the new medical school and growth of the University on this area of the City
4. Seek to have all Commission members obtain and/or maintain Citizen Planner status by the end of Y2012. (Note: Last year, the Commission planned to meet this goal in Y2011. Members Mitchell and Spurlin obtained the certification in Y2011.)
5. Revisit the future land use for the Kensington Church property on Dutton Road (City Council – Y2012 objective)
6. Review the possibility of allowing "stealth" wireless communication facilities on buildings outside areas shown on the Wireless Concentration Map

Commission Recommendations to City Council

The Commission respectfully recommends that the City Council ensure that the Y2012 City of Auburn Hills Budget allows for the following items:

1. Continued staff support from Mr. Cohen, Mr. Keenan, and the City's Administrative Development Review Team
2. Funding to complete neighborhood and subarea planning studies (e.g., citizen participation, maps, printing, technical research, etc.)
3. Funding for educational materials and technical training for Commission members