



# Annual Report

## June 1, 2014 - May 31, 2015

### **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, 2014 and ending on May 31, 2015, the Commission's membership was as follows:

- Greg Ouellette, Chairperson
- Sam Beidoun, Vice Chairperson (Elected PC Vice Chairperson 9-18-14)
- Susan Emery, Secretary
- Chauncey Hitchcock
- Eric Mendieta
- VeRonica Mitchell (City Council Liaison)
- Laura Ochs (10-30-14)
- Bob Pierce
- Carolyn Shearer
- Wade Spurlin (Served as PC Vice Chairperson thru 7-24-14)

During this time period, the Commission held 11 meetings and recommendations were made to the City Council on 29 development related items.

Measurable	Y2007 -2008	Y2008 -2009	Y2009 -2010	Y2010 -2011	Y2011 -2012	Y2012 -2013	Y2013 -2014	<b>Y2014 -2015</b>
Meetings	10	17	10	18	11	12	12	<b>11</b>
Site Plans	5	10	2	6	3	5	12	<b>7</b>
Special Land Use Permits	6	8	6	12	6	3	6	<b>7</b>
Tree Removal Permits	4	3	1	4	3	5	6	<b>8</b>
Planned Unit Developments	2	1	0	0	1	1	3	<b>4</b>
Rezoning	3	2	1	3	1	8	0	<b>1</b>
Text Amendments	0	4	8	1	1	5	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Total Projects</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>

Steve Cohen, Director of Community Development provides primary 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.

Shawn Keenan, Assistant City Planner also provides staff support to the Commission. He is certified as a professional planner (AICP) with the American Planning Association. He has a Bachelor of Science in Public Law & Government and Master Degree in Public Administration from Eastern Michigan University.

### **Notable Commission Items**

#### 1. Development Applications

Notable projects reviewed by the Commission were the following:

- Noah's – 10,300 sq. ft. multi-purpose conference center
- HIROTEC AMERICA, Inc. Headquarters for the Americas – 213,979 office/industrial building
- TI Automotive World Headquarters – 141,480 sq. ft. office/industrial building
- Primary Place – Three, six-unit townhouse style apartments
- First and Main of Auburn Hills – 169,460 sq. ft. senior assisted and independent living community
- Stanley Photographic Studio – 4,100 sq. ft. office/studio building
- Mosaic of Auburn Hills – 81 unit multiple family residential housing development
- Allegra Development – 32,293 sq. ft. office/industrial building for Total Filtration Services, Inc.
- Hydra-Zorb Company – 51,109 sq. ft. office/industrial building

#### 2. Gas and Oil Drilling and Exploration - Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

The Ordinance was amended to address the following two items:

- Added the requirement of a \$25,000 cash bond per well
- Added restitution for cost relating to the City's response to an emergency or incident which resulted from a violation of law or negligence.

#### 3. Automatic Changeable Copy Signs – Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

The Ordinance amended addressed the following items:

- Created a single size standard for all automatic changeable copy signs. Thus, increasing the allowable sign height from six feet (residential) and eight feet (commercial) to a maximum 10 feet tall and 12 feet wide.
- Increased the allowable size of the LED board from 32 square feet to 60 square feet. Allows the LED board to be up to 75% of the allowable sign area.
- Requires all signs to meet a resolution standard of 25 mm.
- Reduced the hold time for messages from 90 seconds to 15 seconds.



#### 4. Methane Gas Presentation (Joint meeting with the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority)

The City held a public meeting with 31 residents in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to inform and advise the public about the planned investigation to delimitate the extent of methane gas recently identified by a third party consultant at the property located at the southeast corner of Dutton Road and Bald Mountain Road.

The City Environmental Consultant Anne Jamieson-Urena, Senior Project Manager from AKT Peerless and Gregory Barrows, Senior Geologist from the Department of Environmental Quality provide their knowledge and expertise on the issue and answer questions from the public.

5. AARP Age-Friendly Community Project

The City's Age-Friendly initiative officially kicked off on Thursday, February 27, 2014, when it held its' first of seven community conversation gatherings. The City gathered an assortment of thoughts and ideas from its residents revolving around improving housing, transportation, and programs for seniors. The goal of this effort is to assure Auburn Hills is a place where all can live, work, play, and age in the years to come.

The City has partnered with the AARP and is one a few communities who is part of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities initiative.

During the previous reporting year (June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014) the Planning Commission was actively involved in gathering input from residents during the seven Community Conversations.

Four additional age friendly meetings took place during this reporting period. The meetings included one business roundtable meeting and three action plan meetings, described below.

On January 15, 2015, a Business Roundtable was convened comprising of non-profits, businesses and health care organizations. The focus of this roundtable was to discover who these groups currently interact or market to the senior population and what challenges they have in providing services. Also this group explored possible solutions and or ideas to improve upon any challenges there might be. The Planning Commission provided much needed support during the meeting.

In early 2015, the Planning Commission was tasked with reviewing the survey results and helping develop a base of action plan ideas, a key component for the creation of the final Action Plan. Each of the three Action Plan Development meetings lasted approximately two hours. Meetings were held on February 17<sup>th</sup>, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, and March 10<sup>th</sup>.

The City's Age Friendly Action Plan was presented to the Planning Commission on April 14, 2015 for review and comment, prior to being presented to City Council for their acceptance and submittal to the AARP for consideration of acceptance. The Planning Commission played an integral role in the development of the action plan by taking on such tasks as gathering input from the public and key partners, reviewing survey results, and developing the base of the action plan ideas.

6. New Paperless Planning Commission Packets

The City began implementing its new paperless planning commission packets. Planning Commissioners received tablets to view meeting materials. The new system is being implement to help reduces paper waste, improve staff efficiencies in the assembling and delivery of meeting material, and provide the planning commission with a convenient way to access to historical materials.

7. Staff Training

Shawn Keenan attended the *Michigan APA Conference* on Mackinaw Island in October 2014. Mr. Cohen attended the *National APA Conference* in Seattle, WA in April 2015.

AICP planners, like Mr. Cohen and Mr. Keenan, 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 60.5 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2015. Mr. Keenan has obtained 60 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2015.

8. 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.

Members Hitchcock, Justice, Mendieta and Shearer attended the *Michigan APA Conference* on Mackinaw Island in October 2014. Several members also attended seminars locally offered by Oakland County

Auburn Hills has been involved with a very limited number of development-related lawsuits over the past 16 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, 2015 and Beyond**

1. Update the City's Master Land Use Plan
2. Finish the Complete Streets Policy
3. Update the NE Corner Neighborhood Plan

### **Commission Recommendations to City Council**

The Commission respectfully recommends that the City Council ensure that the Y2016 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 planning activities (e.g., citizen participation, maps, printing, technical research, Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances updates, etc.)
3. Funding for educational materials and technical training for Commission members