Adopted – August 10, 2016

Annual Report

June 1, 2015 - May 31, 2016

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, 2015 and ending on May 31, 2016, the Commission's membership was as follows:

Greg Ouellette, Chairperson
Sam Beidoun, Vice Chairperson
John Burmeister (City Council Liaison 12-8-15)
Susan Emery, Secretary
Chauncey Hitchcock
Eric Mendieta
VeRonica Mitchell (Served as City Council Liaison thru 11-17-15)
Laura Ochs
Bob Pierce
Carolyn Shearer

During this time period, the Commission held 14 meetings and recommendations were made to the City Council on 26 development related items.

Measurable	Y2007 -2008	Y2008 -2009	Y2009 -2010	Y2010 -2011	Y2011 -2012	Y2012 -2013	Y2013 -2014	Y2014 -2015	**Y2015 -2016**
Meetings	10	17	10	18	11	12	12	11	**14**
Site Plans	5	10	2	6	3	5	12	7	**10**
Special Land Use Permits	6	8	6	12	6	3	6	7	**8**
Tree Removal Permits	4	3	1	4	3	5	6	8	**6**
Planned Unit Developments	2	1	0	0	1	1	3	4	**4**
Rezonings	3	2	1	3	1	8	0	1	**3**
Master Plan Amendments	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	**1**
Text Amendments	0	4	8	1	1	5	1	2	**2**
Total Projects	20	28	18	26	15	27	28	29	**34**

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:
   - RACARO Child Seating North American Headquarters – 90,000 sq. ft. office/manufacturing facility.
   - Primary Road Industrial North – Two 8,000 sq. ft. and one 10,000 sq. ft. light industrial buildings.
   - Shield Material Handling North American Headquarters – 75,050 sq. ft. office/warehouse/ distribution facility.
   - The Residences at Thirty Two 50 – One, four-story mixed use building comprising of 48 residential units and 3,918 sq. ft. of commercial space.
   - The Parkways PUD Phase Two – Two 8-unit townhouses, one 10-unit townhouse, and one 4-unit townhouse.
   - Villa Montclair PUD – 88 detached single-family housing unit development with one clubhouse.
   - Northern Sign Company – 18,585 sq. ft. light industrial building
   - Auburn Hills Marketplace – 12,206 sq. ft. shopping center, with drive-through facility and outdoor seating area.
   - 3300 University Drive – Redevelop the existing building into two separate facilities, consisting of one two-story multi-tenant office building and one 78,475 sq. ft. light industrial building.
   - Staybridge Suites and Holiday Inn Express & Suites – Two four-story hotels (One 92 room Holiday Inn Express and one 90 room Staybridge Suites.
   - Aqua-Tots of Auburn Hills – Renovation of the existing building into an indoor recreation facility.
   - Dana Corporation – 46,400 sq. ft. industrial building addition.
   - Summit Place Kia of Auburn Hills – 25,749 sq. ft. automobile dealership.

2. Accessory Building - Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance
   The Ordinance was amended to clarify the definition of an accessory building, assuring structures meet the goals of City Council to:
   - To create an aesthetically pleasing community
   - To preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods.

3. Billboard Signs – Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance
   The Ordinance amended addressed the following items:
   - Expanded the purpose section explaining the reasons why the City regulates billboards.
   - Reduced the required separation distance radius between billboards from 10,000 feet to 4,000 feet.
     - *This change corresponds with the opinion of the United States Court of Appeals in the Hucul Advertising LLC v Charter Township of Gaines case which stated that Gaines' 4,000 foot separation distance requirement between billboards was a valid "time, place, and manner" restriction on speech and therefore enforceable.*
   - Billboards shall only be permitted in the I-1, Light Industrial District on property that abuts I-75.
   - Amended the height and setback requirements for billboards to meet modern standards. Removed antiquated requirements associated with these provisions.
   - Added standards for LED digital display on billboards

- Added a provision that would permit a Planned Unit Development (PUD) application to be submitted to allow relief to the strict standards of the section, at the full discretion of the City Council, in exchange for a recognizable net public benefit to the City. A variance to the Zoning Board of Appeals will not be permitted for billboard signs.

4. Amendment to the northeast Corner Neighborhood Master Plan
   Amended the Northeast Corner Neighborhood Master Plan for 3995 N. Squirrel Road (Sidwell No. 14-01-100-018) to allow a residential open space development on the property at a density of up to 3.2 units per gross acre, in lieu of the planned 2.5 units per gross acre.

5. Methane Gas Investigation Update (Joint meeting with the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority)
   The City held a public meeting with 5 residents in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to inform, advise and update the public about the results of the methane gas investigation conducted by the City at the properties located along the east side of Bald Mountain Road, south of Dutton Road.

   The City Environmental Consultant Robert Lambdin, Director of Operations from AKT Peerless and Gregory Barrows, Senior Geologist from the Department of Environmental Quality provide their knowledge and expertise on the findings and answered questions from the public.

6. New Paperless Planning Commission Packets for the Public
   The City expanded its paperless planning commission packets. Planning Commissioners and the public can view meeting materials on the Planning Commission webpage. The new system is being implement help reduces paper waste, improve staff efficiencies in the assembling and delivery of meeting material, and provide the planning commission and the public with a convenient way to access to historical materials.

7. Staff Training
   Shawn Keenan attended the *Michigan APA Conference* held in Detroit in the month of October 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 22.75 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2017. Mr. Keenan has obtained 24.25 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2017.

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 Ouellette and Mendieta attended the *Michigan APA Conference* in Detroit, in October 2015. 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 17 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.

9. Woodlands Consultant
   The City selected a new woodlands consultant, Julie Stachecki, President and owner of Site Specific, Inc. Ms. Stachecki has extensive knowledge and background in the fields of horticulture, arboriculture, and landscape management. She also possesses an outstanding attitude, great communication skills and is a very team-oriented professional making her the "right fit" for the City of Auburn Hills.

On-Going Planning Activities through May 31, 2016 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 Y2017 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