



# **Annual Report**

**June 1, 2021 - May 31, 2022**

## ***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 ongoing 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, 2021, and ending on May 31, 2022, the Commission's membership was as follows:

Greg Ouellette, Chairperson  
Sam Beidoun, Vice-Chairperson  
Laura Ochs, Secretary  
Brain Marzolf, City Council Liaison  
Chauncey Hitchcock  
Eric Mendieta (served until 7-15-21)  
Carlene Pederson  
Bob Pierce  
Raymond Saelens (appointed on 8-2-21)  
Carolyn Shearer

During this time period, the Commission held six meetings, and recommendations were made to City Council on 25 development-related items.

Measurable	Y2011 -2012	Y2012 -2013	Y2013 -2014	Y2014 -2015	Y2015 -2016	Y2016 -2017	Y2017 -2018	Y2018 -2019	Y2019 -2020	Y2020 -2021	Y2021 -2022
Meetings	11	12	12	11	14	13	11	11	9	7	6
Site Plans	3	5	12	7	10	17	12	12	10	3	7
Special Land Use Permits	6	3	6	7	8	11	7	8	9	4	11
Tree Removal Permits	3	5	6	8	6	7	11	13	9	1	4
Planned Unit Developments	1	1	3	4	4	5	6	6	4	3	1
Rezoning	1	8	0	1	3	4	4	5	0	1	0
Master Plan Amendments	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Text Amendments	1	5	1	2	2	4	1	2	1	1	1
Private Road	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total Projects	15	27	28	29	34	62	42	54	42	14	25

Note: The Planning Commission's regularly scheduled December study session was canceled due to a rise in COVID-19, and the Commission's regularly scheduled meetings in June, August, March, April, and May were canceled due to a slowdown in construction.

### **Professional Planning Support Staff**

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 certified as a professional planner (AICP) with the American Planning Association. He has a Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University.

Shawn Keenan, City Planner, also provides staff support to the Commission. Mr. Keenan has served the Commission since March 15, 2011. He is certified as a professional planner (AICP) with the American Planning Association. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Law & Government and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Eastern Michigan University.

### **Notable Commission Items**

#### **1. Development Applications**

Notable projects reviewed by the Commission were the following:

- University Plaza – The proposed development called for expanding the existing Mongolian Grill restaurant and converting it into an 8,550 square foot four-unit retail center with a restaurant with outdoor seating occupying the easternmost unit.
- TUV SUD America, Inc. – This is a new 79,084 square foot light industrial building on a newly created 6.55-acre parcel located at the southeast corner of Dutton Road and Bald Mountain Road. The new facility provides approximately 10,201 square feet of office space and 68,883 square feet of laboratory/testing space.
- University Market - This development called for the construction of a two-story commercial/office building, approximately 27,419 square feet in size, on the 2.75-acre parcel located at 2111 North Squirrel Road, where the Macaroni Grill sat.
- Jiffy Lube – This development called for constructing a 4,685 square foot automotive service care facility with five-service bays on a 0.716-acre site located on a portion of the Meijer parking lot at 800 Brown Road.
- Parkview Residences - This residential open space project located on a 9.76-acre parcel just north of Hawk Woods Park called for 14 two-unit condominium buildings for a total of 28 one-family dwelling units. The condominium units, which will be owner-occupied, are tailored for persons 55 years of age and above.
- Hiretec America Building Expansion – The expansion called for constructing a 128,290 square foot warehouse addition at HIROTEC AMERICA'S headquarters located at 3000 High Meadow Circle. The addition will increase the size of the existing building from 213,979 square feet to 342,269 square feet.

#### **2. Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance**

- Article XX, Administration and Enforcement, Section 2007. Performance Guarantees. The Ordinance amendment was designed to clarify the City's expectations for performance guarantees to be deposited by applicants with the City to assure that site improvements associated with development projects are completed and maintained per City standards, requirements, and approval conditions.

#### **3. Support Staff Training**

Shawn Keenan attended the *Michigan APA Conference* held virtually on October 26-29, 2021. Mr. Kennan and Mr. Cohen also participated in several other virtual planning webinars in 2021 and 2022.

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 1.0 credits must be on the topics of planning law, ethics, equity, and sustainability & resilience. Mr. Cohen has earned 19.00 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2023. Mr. Keenan has earned 31.50 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2023.

#### 4. 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.

Due to the pandemic, no members of the Planning Commission were able to attend the *Michigan APA Conference* held virtually on October 26-29, 2022.

The City of Auburn Hills has been involved with a very limited number of development-related lawsuits over the past 20 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.

#### 5. The City's Woodlands Preservation Ordinance – City's Tree Fund

During this reporting period, one development established that the planting of the required replacement trees on-site was not possible, and an appropriate off-site location was not available. In this case, the applicant chose to make a payment into the City's Tree Fund and/or utilized the alternative provision of Section 34-310(b)(4) in a way in which the City Council believed the highest and best outcome could be achieved.

- Hirotec America – Building Addition – The applicant made a payment of \$42,940 into the City's Tree Fund to account for the 113 replacement trees that could not be planted on-site or at alternate locations.

#### **Planning Commission Terms and Attendance Records**

During this reporting time period, the Commission held six Regularly Scheduled meetings. No Special Meetings were held during this reporting period.

Name	Term Endings	Regular Meetings	Special Meetings
Greg Ouellette	July 2024	5 / 6	0 / 0
Sam Beidoun	July 2023	5 / 6	0 / 0
Laura Ochs	July 2023	5 / 6	0 / 0
Brian Marzolf	Nov. 2022	6 / 6	0 / 0
Chauncey Hitchcock	July 2024	5 / 6	0 / 0
Eric Mendieta	July 2021	1 / 1	0 / 0
Carlene Pederson	July 2022	6 / 6	0 / 0
Bob Pierce	July 2022	5 / 6	0 / 0
Raymond Saelens	July 2024	3 / 5	0 / 0
Carolyn Shearer	July 2022	5 / 6	0 / 0

#### **On-Going Planning Activities based on the City Council's Y2023 Strategic Goals & Objectives**

1. Explore options for industrial redevelopment within the community.
2. Continue to foster development along the M-24/Opdyke Road Corridor.
3. Focus redevelopment efforts on TIFA, city-owned, and private properties.
4. Continue to keep Auburn Hills friendly and livable for all ages and abilities.

**Commission Recommendations to City Council**

The Commission respectfully recommends that the City Council ensure that the Y2023 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