



## City of Auburn Hills Planning Commission

### Annual Report June 1, 2023 - May 31, 2024

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:

1. Summary of the Commission's operations during the past 12 months
2. The status of any ongoing planning activities
3. 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 months starting on June 1, 2023, and ending on May 31, 2024, the Commission's membership was as follows:

Greg Ouellette, Chairperson  
Sam Beidoun, Vice-Chairperson  
Laura Ochs, Secretary  
Brian Marzolf, City Council Liaison  
(served until December 6, 2023)  
Jack Ferguson, City Council Liaison  
(started on December 6, 2023)

Chauncey Hitchcock  
Cynthia Pavlich  
Raymond Saelens  
Carolyn Shearer  
Dominick Tringali

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

Measurable	Y2014 -2015	Y2015 -2016	Y2016 -2017	Y2017 -2018	Y2018 -2019	Y2019 -2020	Y2020 -2021	Y2021 -2022	Y2022 -2023	Y2023 -2024
Meetings	11	14	13	11	11	9	7	6	9	9
Site Plans	7	10	17	12	12	10	3	7	7	5
Special Land Use Permits	7	8	11	7	8	9	4	11	5	9
Tree Removal Permits	8	6	7	11	13	9	1	4	10	7
Planned Unit Developments	4	4	5	6	6	4	3	1	7	3
Rezoning	1	3	4	4	5	0	1	0	1	1
Master Plan Amendments	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Text Amendments	2	2	4	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Private Road	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Total Projects	29	34	49	42	46	33	14	25	31	26

## **Professional Planning Support Staff**

Steve Cohen, Director of Community Development, provides primary staff support to the Planning 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 holds a Bachelor's and Master's in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University.

Devin Lang, Construction Coordinator / Assistant to the Director of Community Development, has assisted Mr. Cohen with providing staff support to the Planning Commission since November 16, 2023. Among other duties, Mr. Lang oversees the implementation of private construction projects and permits approved by the City. He has a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University.

## **Notable Planning Commission Actions**

### **A. Development Applications**

Notable projects reviewed by the Commission were the following:

#### **1. Tommy's Boats Auburn Hills**

Request for Planned Unit Development Option and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a 21,483 square-foot boat dealership sales and service building, a four-tier state-of-the-art steel and glass "Boat Display Tower," which will display four boats, and an associated 97-space inventory storage lot for boat sales. The 4.89-acre site is zoned B-2, General Business district, located east of Topgolf Auburn Hills on Great Lakes Crossing Drive, just west of Joslyn Road.



#### **2. Five Points Community Church**

Request for Rezoning, Special Land Use Permit, Site Plan, and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a 10,220 sq. ft. building expansion to their existing facility at 3411 E. Walton Boulevard. The site is 8.36 acres in size and zoned B-2, General Business District. The plans call for the demolition of the existing multi-purpose wing of the building to make room for expansion, which includes a new nave, sanctuary, commons area, green room, usher room, restroom, cry room, and hallway. Once the proposed project is complete, the overall building will be 45,780 square feet in size.



**3. Pacific and Taylor - Light Industrial Speculative Building (Pacific Drive Industrial).**

Request for Site Plan and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a 47,728 sq. ft. light industrial building at the northeast corner of Pacific Drive and Taylor Road. The 3.7-acre parcel is within the Metro North Technology Park and zoned I-1, Light Industrial District.



**4. AM General**

Request for Special Land Use Permit approval to revise and expand their existing Special Land Use Permit to allow the overnight storage of vehicles, containers, and trailers at their business located at 1399 Pacific Drive. The facility serves as AM General's engineering, advanced technology, and prototype development center. The property is zoned I-1, Light Industrial District.

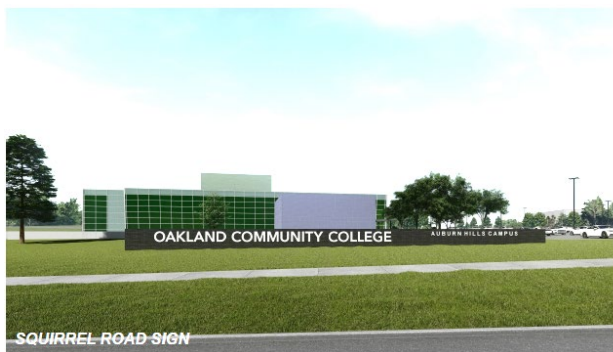
**5. 3295 Lapeer Road West Industrial Building - Speculative Building**

Request for Site Plan and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a 149,170-square-foot speculative light industrial building at 3295 Lapeer Road West, located at the terminus of Lapeer Road West, south of the M-24 Connector. The 19.79-acre parcel is zoned I-1, Light Industrial District.



**6. Oakland Community College (OCC)**

Request for Special Land Use Permit approval to install five new identification signs at OCC's Auburn Hills campus at 2900 Featherstone Road. The property is zoned T&R, Technology and Research District.



**7. Chick-fil-A Restaurant**

Request for Special Land Use Permit, Site Plan, and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a 5,196-square-foot Chick-fil-A restaurant with a drive-through facility and outdoor seating area at 2111 N. Squirrel Road. The land is currently vacant, as the Romano's Macaroni Grill restaurant, which previously operated on the site, was permanently closed in March 2020 and later demolished in February 2022. The property is 2.24 acres in size and zoned B-2, General Business District.



**8. Greystone Pickleball Club - Auburn Hills**

Request for Planned Unit Development Option approval to construct a 60,528-square-foot indoor recreational facility and event venue on a 4.7-acre site east of N. Opdyke Road, north of Featherstone Road. The development is proposed to occupy three vacant parcels, currently zoned B-2, General Business District and T&R, Technology and Research District.



**9. Penske Vehicle Services – 2150 Executive Hills Court**

Request for Special Land Use Permit, Revised Site Plan, and Revised Tree Removal Permit approval to complete construction and utilize the existing speculative 114,366-square-foot facility at 2150 Executive Hills Court. Penske Vehicle Services intends to operate a state-of-the-art vehicle painting facility with associated overnight vehicle storage on the property that will primarily provide custom paint enhancements for new vehicles directly from the assembly line. The 10.12-acre parcel is zoned T&R, Technology and Research District.



**10. Joslyn Road Fuel Station - Mobil**

Request for Planned Unit Development Option and Tree Removal Permit approval to construct a Mobil-branded passenger and commercial vehicle fueling station and convenience store on a 5.07-acre parcel, zoned B-2, General Business District. The site is generally located west of Joslyn Road, south of Great Lakes Crossing Drive. The proposed development will consist of a passenger vehicle fueling area with 16 fueling positions in the front on the site adjacent to Joslyn Road, a commercial vehicle area with three (3) fueling positions designed to accommodate semi-trucks in the rear of the site adjacent to the landfill, and a 4,608-square-foot convenience store.



**B. Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance**

A text amendment to Article XII. T&R, Technology and Research Districts of the Zoning Ordinance was drafted and approved by the City Council to incorporate ordinance language that would allow more prominent sized identification signs to be installed at *“Colleges, universities, and other such institutions of higher learning, both public and private, provided the property is located on the land bounded by M-59 and Featherstone Road, between I-75 and Squirrel Road.”* The ordinance amendment allowed more prominent identification signs on Oakland Community College’s property.

**C. Adoption of the 2024-2028 Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

The Planning Commission/Recreation Commission adopted the City of Auburn Hills 2024-2028 Parks and Recreation Master Plan on January 10, 2024, and the City Council adopted it on January 22, 2024. The adoption of the plan makes the City eligible to apply for grants. The plan focuses on enhancing and maintaining the City’s current park system, completing pathway gaps concurrent with road construction projects, implementing the Riverwalk Master Plan, and maintaining pathway loops throughout the community. The City’s events and programming will continue to focus on community demand based on available staffing and resources.

#### D. Age-Friendly Auburn Hills – Community Conversations

A series of Community Conversations were held in the Spring and Fall of 2023 designed to obtain input from residents. Community feedback has been integral in renewing the City's Age-Friendly designation with AARP. During four open forums in May, September, and October 2023, a team of City Council members, Planning Commission members, City staff, and volunteers sat down with participating residents to discuss a few of AARP's domains of livability. Conversations centered on how residents receive communication and information from the City, volunteer and civic engagement, and public safety.

The composite image includes a flyer and five photographs. The flyer, titled "We want to hear from you!", invites residents to help define and design their age-friendly community. It lists two meetings: Thursday, Sept. 28 at the Community Center (6:00 - 8:00 PM) and Wednesday, Oct. 11 at Avondale High School (6:00 - 8:00 PM). It includes contact information for Gabriella Allen at 248.364.6943 and logos for Auburn Hills, Age-Friendly Auburn Hills, and AARP. The five photographs show various scenes from the community conversations: a group of people at a table with balloons, two men discussing documents, a woman presenting to a group, a large group photo with a person in a mobility scooter, and a group of women looking at a "ROCK STAR idea?" board.

**We want to hear from you!**

**Come and help us define and design your age-friendly community!**

How old will you and your neighbors be in 2040? A big change is coming. The City of Auburn Hills is preparing for a huge demographic shift and the increasing needs of our community.

**You're invited to join the discussion!**  
See the reverse side for meeting dates and locations.

**AGE FRIENDLY AUBURN HILLS**

Your input will help shape many of the City's future policy and financial decisions regarding housing, transportation and programs offered. Come tell us about your experiences and ideas for improving your community.

**Thurs., Sept. 28** Community Center  
6:00 - 8:00 PM 3350 E. Seyburn Drive

**Wed., Oct. 11** Avondale High School  
6:00 - 8:00 PM 2800 Waukegan Street

Refreshments will be provided.

**RSVP appreciated! Bring a friend!**  
Please indicate which meeting(s) you plan to attend and if you are in need of special accommodations or transportation.

Contact Gabriella Allen at **248.364.6943** to reserve your spot.

**AH AUBURN HILLS**  
1827 N. Squirrel Rd.  
Auburn Hills, MI 48326

**AGE FRIENDLY AUBURN HILLS**

**AARP**

In 2013, an initiative led by Karen Adcock, Director of Recreation and Senior Services, and Steve Cohen resulted in the City of Auburn Hills becoming the first municipality from the State of Michigan to be accepted into the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Today, there are 10 Michigan communities in the Age-Friendly network and 800 communities in the U.S. Over the last decade, the City of Auburn Hills completed 16 out of 20 items outlined in the original Age-Friendly Auburn Hills Action Plan – Phase I. To ensure continued progress in improving the quality of life for people of all ages in our community, the City has been taking the steps necessary to maintain its Age-Friendly status. The first of those steps has been to gather feedback from the community.

#### **E. City Council Workshop – City of Auburn Hills Housing Policy**

On February 5, 2024, Steve Cohen provided a PowerPoint presentation and led a discussion with the City Council regarding the City's Housing Policy. Chairperson Greg Ouellette and Member Dominick Tringali attended the workshop on behalf of the Planning Commission. Mr. Cohen reviewed the history of residential land use in the City, including the number of housing units, and presented an overview of the City's population demographics and housing stock. He also reviewed the inventory of the City's housing, focusing on attached single-family vs. multi-family housing stock.

Mr. Cohen discussed the results of past neighborhood master plan studies. He requested direction from the City Council regarding housing, such as whether the City should proactively seek to grow its residential population. He discussed the pros and cons of adding additional housing units, both single-family homes and rental units. He noted that the City has a smaller number of rental housing than other communities but a higher percentage because the City does not have as many total dwelling units as most communities. He explained that there are not a lot of rental housing opportunities left since the City is nearing buildout.

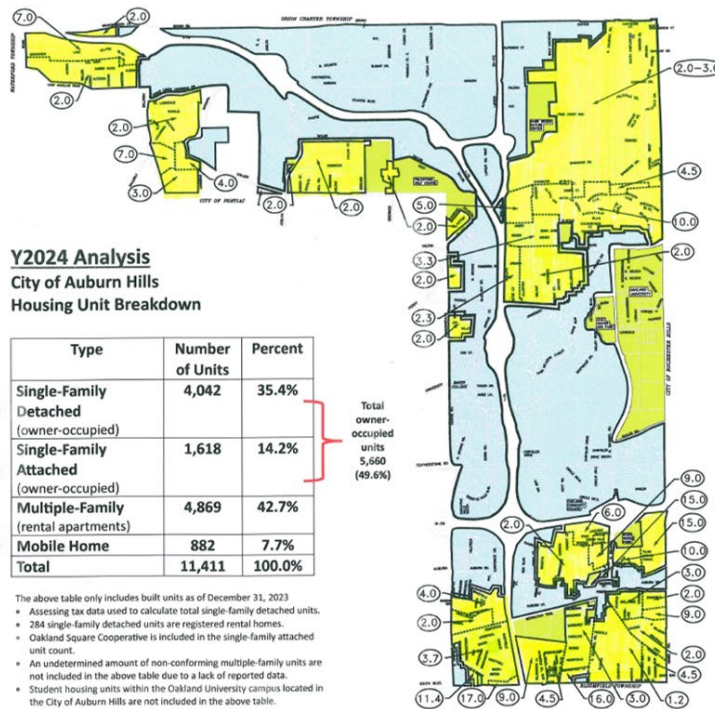
Discussion ensued regarding this topic with the City Council. Some believe that many of each generation/age group do not want to own a home. Also, the increase in population will affect the cost of City services. It was suggested that a mobile home-type park where each lot is owned separately could be a low-cost housing option. It was noted that apartments should be located in a walkable area to stores and restaurants. A tiny home community was also suggested. It was pointed out that there is a void in the market for ranch-style housing options, both rental and owner-occupied. There was concern that if there were too many rentals and a downturn in the economy, those units would deteriorate and cause blight. It was suggested that the City be particular and allow good projects with good architecture in the right area. There needs to be a balance, and certain areas make sense for additional rental housing developments. The consensus was that the City Council needed more time to consider these issues and would like to discuss them further at a later date.



**FEBRUARY 5, 2024**  
**AUBURN HILLS CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**  
**DISCUSSION REGARDING HOUSING POLICY**  
**(FOCUS ON RENTAL HOUSING)**

### **AGENDA**

1. History of residential land use in Pontiac Township/Auburn Hills
2. Overview of the City's population demographics and housing stock
3. City's rental home registration program
4. Inventory of the City's housing with a focus on attached single-family and multi-family housing stock
5. Next Steps
  - a. Should the City proactively seek to grow its residential population?
  - b. Constraints on the construction of detached single-family home developments
  - c. City Council's preferred multi-family housing design
  - d. Potential infill site locations for multi-family housing (Condominiums/Apartments)



### Support Staff Training

Steve Cohen attended the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, from April 13 to 17, 2024. In addition to the national conference, Mr. Cohen attended the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association Conference in Traverse City from October 4 to 6, 2023. Mr. Cohen also participated in several other virtual planning webinars in 2023 and 2024 to further advance his skills. The Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association recognized Mr. Cohen for 30 years of membership at their annual conference.

AICP planners like Mr. Cohen must obtain professional development training to maintain their credentials. AICP planners must earn at least 32 Certification Maintenance (CM) credits (1 hour = 1 CM credit) within a designated two-year reporting period. A minimum of 1.0 credits must be on planning law, sustainability and resilience, ethics, and equity. Mr. Cohen has earned 35.00 CM credits thus far for the current reporting period of January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2025. Mr. Cohen earned 48.75 CM credits during the previous two-year reporting period, which ended on December 31, 2023.

### Commission Training

Training is a high priority for the Planning Commission and City Council. Members face an enormous responsibility to help guide the community's physical development. Poor decisions could lead the City into costly litigation. The Planning Commission has benefited greatly over the years from training, whether 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 Sam Beidoun and Raymond Saelens attended the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association Conference in Traverse City from October 4 to 6, 2023. Chairperson Greg Ouellette participated in a Planning and Zoning Essentials training session presented by the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association at Oakland County's offices on April 29, 2024.

The City has been involved with very few development-related lawsuits over the past 25 years, mainly attributed to a proactive Planning Commissioner training program and well-trained staff. This record of accomplishment has helped the City lower its general liability insurance rates over the years, which saves taxpayers money.

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

During this reporting period, the Planning Commission held nine regularly scheduled meetings and no special meetings. The table below outlines each member's term and attendance record.

Name	Term Endings	Regular Meetings	Percent Attended
Greg Ouellette	July 2024	9 / 9	100%
Sam Beidoun	July 2026	8 / 9	89%
Laura Ochs	July 2026	5 / 9	56%
Brian Marzolf	Nov. 2023	4 / 4	100%
Jack Ferguson	Nov. 2025	5 / 5	100%
Chauncey Hitchcock	July 2024	6 / 9	67%
Cynthia Pavlich	July 2025	8 / 9	89%
Raymond Saelens	July 2024	4 / 9	45%
Carolyn Shearer	July 2025	7 / 9	78%
Dominick Tringali	July 2025	8 / 9	89%

### **Woodlands Preservation Ordinance – City's Tree Fund**

During this reporting period, two developments (3295 Lapeer Road West Industrial Building and Penske Vehicle Systems) established that planting the required replacement trees on-site was not possible. Thus, each developer chose to make a payment into the City's Tree Fund for future tree plantings for a total of \$257,260.

### **Planned Unit Development Option – Financial Contributions for Public Purposes**

During this reporting period, two developments (Tommy's Boats Auburn Hills and Joslyn Road Fuel Station - Mobil) provided financial contributions for public purposes as a net public benefit of their project, totaling \$350,000. The \$250,000 financial contribution for Tommy's Boats Auburn Hills is anticipated to be applied to pay for constructing the new Public Square in Downtown Auburn Hills. The \$100,000 financial contribution for the Joslyn Road Fuel Center - Mobil has yet to be assigned to a City project.

### **Planning Activities Per City Council's Y2024/2025 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.
5. Update the City's 2006 Open Space/Green Infrastructure Vision Plan
6. Update the City's Architectural Design Policy
7. Conduct a comprehensive review of the City's land use in a joint meeting with the City Council

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

The Commission respectfully recommends that the City Council ensure that the Y2024 and Y2025 City of Auburn Hills Budgets allow for the following items:

1. Continued staff support from Steve Cohen, Devin Lang, and the City's Administrative Development Review Team
2. Funding for planning activities (e.g., citizen participation, maps, printing, technical research, Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances updates, etc.)
3. Funding for educational materials, technical training, and conferences for Planning Commission members and City staff.