

May 5, 2008

Commissioner David Potts, Chairperson
Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee
1200 North Telegraph Road
Pontiac, MI 48341

SUBJECT: County Code No. MP 08-04, Planning & Economic Development Services' review of the City of Farmington Hills Master Plan for Future Land Use 2008

Dear Chairperson Potts and Committee Members:

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission has prepared a new master plan to replace its 1996 Master Plan. The following is a review and analysis of the proposed plan.

Under the amendments to the Municipal Planning Act, which took effect December 20, 2006, Farmington Hills is required to send a copy of the draft plan to Oakland County and neighboring communities for comment prior to adoption. Oakland County has 63 days to submit comments on a draft plan. The May 13, 2008 Oakland County Coordinating Zoning Committee (CZC) meeting falls within our 63-day comment period. Neighboring communities also have 63 days to submit comments directly to Farmington Hills and are asked to send a copy of any comments to the County as well. Once the comment period has expired, the Planning Commission can hold a public hearing and take final action to adopt the plan.

According to the Farmington Hills Planning Department, the Cities of Farmington, Novi, Southfield, and Livonia; the Village of Franklin; Bloomfield, Commerce, West Bloomfield, Northville, and Redford Townships; the Farmington and Clarenceville School Districts; Ameritech, Consumers Energy, Detroit Edison, and SEMCOG were sent a copy of the draft plan. All of these communities, agencies, and utilities have received notice of the CZC meeting. Since Glen Oaks County Park is in Farmington Hills, county staff also sent a notice to Oakland County Parks and Recreation along with a copy of the Future Land Use map. Comments were received from Northville Township, Farmington Public Schools, and the City of Novi, and are attached.

Public Participation Process

The City of Farmington Hills undertook two studies that would become important components of this master plan update. The first study was prepared by the Redevelopment Committee that was appointed by the City Council to identify areas in the City for possible redevelopment. That study was completed in August 2006. The second was a Sustainability Study prepared by a private consultant and delivered in November 2006.

Both of these reports were used by the Farmington Hills Planning Commission as they worked on their new master plan from spring 2006 to March 2008. During this time, many Planning Commission meetings were held to discuss the plan. These meetings were open to the public as was a special joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting to present the draft plan. In addition, *“the Planning Commission invited members of the development community to provide input regarding all aspects of development in Farmington Hills.”* (Page 8)

Plan Contents

The Plan consists of the following sections: History & Background of Land Use Planning; Current Characteristics; Future Land Uses; Thoroughfares; and Action Planning. *“The primary focus of this Master Plan is a continued effort to encourage redevelopment within designated commercial areas together with a renewed effort in preserving and enhancing existing residential neighborhoods.”* (Page 4)

Farmington Hills is a large, suburban city in south central Oakland County. The City of Farmington Hills is fairly young, having only incorporated in 1973. Prior to this, the area of Farmington Hills was made up of Farmington Township and the Villages of Quakertown and Wood Creek Farms. Since 1960, the area that became the City of Farmington Hills has seen tremendous growth. Between 1960 and 1970, the population almost doubled from 26,692 to 48,694. By 2000, the population had more than tripled to 82,111, making it the most populous community in Oakland County. Future growth will be limited by the amount of vacant land. According to SEMCOG’s 2030 Regional Development Forecast, the population of Farmington Hills will decline slightly to 76,823 persons in 2030, although the number of households is projected to increase by approximately 2,500.

In 2000, the largest age group in the City was the 35-54 year olds (32%). *“The City’s population has not yet “aged” significantly because although there are fewer in the “family forming” ages, the number of children 19 and under has actually increased by over 2,000...Not yet an aging population, but the trends show that the next census will probably show more significant changes.”* (Pages 20-21)

In terms of land use, 52% of Farmington Hills is in a residential use, consisting of single family homes, single family cluster, duplexes, mobile home parks, and multiple family dwellings. Between 1980 and 2006, the City gained a net total of 13,652 housing units, of which 53% were multiple family units. Over six percent (6.3%) of the total community acreage is multiple family, with locations scattered throughout the City.

Street right-of-way is the next highest land use with over 17% of total land area. Several major expressways are located in Farmington Hills, mainly I-696 that traverses east-west through the central part of the City, I-275 that is located at the western edge, and M-5 that is located south of the City of Farmington. The three main north-south routes are Orchard Lake Road and Middlebelt Road, both in the eastern half of the City, and Haggerty located on the western boundary line with the City of Novi. The Mile Roads provide east-west access throughout the City, as well as access to the neighboring communities of Novi and Southfield.

A separate Thoroughfares chapter classifies the various roadways in the City and identifies some road improvements planned in the future. Orchard Lake Road from Twelve Mile to Fourteen Mile Roads is envisioned to be widened to a four lane boulevard with a landscaped median. New roundabouts are also planned for the following four intersections along Fourteen Mile: at Haggerty, Drake, Farmington, and Orchard Lake Roads. A fifth roundabout is planned at Halsted and Nine Mile Road.

With such good freeway access and visibility, intensive uses of commercial, office, and industrial are well represented in Farmington Hills, accounting for 10.2% of total land area. Key office corridors are located along Northwestern Highway, along the north side of I-696, and on the west side of I-275, adjacent to the City of Novi. Commercial shopping centers are located in a number of locations, including along Orchard Lake Road and on the south side of Northwestern Highway near Fourteen Mile Road. Industrial uses are shown on the Existing Land Use map as either Industrial-Research Office or Industrial. These uses are mainly located either on the western edge of the City around the I-696/I-275 interchange area or along Eight Mile Road at the southern boundary of the community adjacent to the City of Livonia.

Another 10.6% of land area is devoted to recreational uses. Recreation is broken out by public park (1.9%), golf course (2.7%), or private recreation (6%). Glen Oaks County Park on Thirteen Mile Road is one of several golf courses located within the City of Farmington Hills. Private recreation mainly consists of open space set aside within single family subdivisions for the use of subdivision residents.

Three different school districts cover Farmington Hills with public and private school sites located throughout the City. Several higher education facilities are also located in Farmington Hills. The largest campus is that of Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus, located on the south side of I-696 at Orchard Lake Road. On Twelve Mile Road, there is a satellite campus of Wayne State University, and the Michigan School of Psychology recently opened a small campus south of the OCC campus on Orchard Lake Road.

Environmental and historic resources are featured in the master plan update. Wetlands, woodlands, river corridors, and natural beauty roads are discussed. Due to the devastation caused by pests like the Emerald Ash Borer, the importance of tree protection and tree plantings is highlighted. Historic structures and sites have been inventoried, and a map showing the location of almost 70 historic buildings and three historic sites is included in the plan.

According to the 2007 land use inventory prepared by the consultant, only 3.3% of Farmington Hills is considered vacant (703 acres). Given the built out nature of Farmington Hills, there is an acknowledgement that new growth will primarily come through redevelopment. About half of the master plan is devoted to an identification and discussion of redevelopment opportunities for both residential and non-residential redevelopment.

Regarding residential redevelopment, 15 “Special Residential Planning Areas” are identified in the plan. Current use of these sites varies. Some of the sites are collections of larger residential parcels where there is enough acreage to allow for additional lot splits. Other sites are currently institutional but could be redeveloped for a residential use in the future if the ownership of the parcel changes. Examples of this category include the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher site on Twelve Mile and Inkster; Sisters of Mercy campus on Eleven Mile, east of Middlebelt; and the 80-acre Boys and Girls Republic site on Nine Mile Road between Middlebelt and Inkster. The plan also recognizes the possibility of municipal ownership of the Sisters of Mercy campus and the Boys and Girls Republic site “*if the opportunity presents itself*” for city acquisition for a municipal center or city park respectively.

Goals and policies are developed for each of the 15 residential planning areas. In some cases, a schematic concept plan is provided to show how the existing lots could be reconfigured to allow for the increased density. These schematics usually illustrate how access and/or natural resource issues such as flood plains or wetlands could be addressed. Site condominiums and subdivisions are the primary means suggested for redevelopment although six sites are specifically identified for the cluster option, where homes are allowed on smaller lots to preserve natural features on the remainder of the site. In the descriptions of each residential planning area, special emphasis is given to ensuring that the new lots will be compatible in density with surrounding residential neighborhoods.

In a similar fashion, non-residential land use is examined, and sites with potential for redevelopment are identified. The following four general classifications for non-residential areas are used: Freeway Redevelopment, Mixed-Use Developments, Business Redevelopment, and Industrial Redevelopment. The key corridors for redevelopment are Orchard Lake Road, I-696, I-275, Grand River Avenue, and Eight Mile Road.

To encourage redevelopment, the master plan identifies ways sites could increase in intensity, thereby maximizing the return on investment. Increasing height limitations, expanding the range of land uses permitted in some zoning districts, and reducing off-street parking requirements are mentioned. In the Freeway Redevelopment areas along I-696 and I-275, buildings might be permitted to exceed three stories in selected areas, and LEED Certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) would be encouraged. The plan recommends amending the zoning ordinance to allow office and research uses in the industrial district, and hotels, business schools, or colleges in the large office zoning district.

Several areas are targeted for Mixed-Use Developments including Northwestern Highway and Orchard Lake Road, the Orchard Lake Road Corridor, Haggerty at Fourteen Mile Road, and areas along Grand River. These districts could have a mixture of retail, office, and residential uses. Buildings would be in closer proximity to each other fostering more of a pedestrian orientation and creating a downtown feel to the area. Upper floor residential would provide vibrancy to the area, and building heights could be increased. *“In the case of mixed-use developments on Orchard Lake Road, proposals of the Orchard Lake Road Corridor Study regarding lighting, street furniture and flowering trees could be consulted for guidance in design.”* (Page 72)

Business Redevelopment is a term for areas within the City that are older with buildings in need of repair. Small lots with inadequate building setbacks characterize these areas so consolidation of parcels is encouraged. Allowing flexibility in parking or building setback requirements may encourage new investment. Another goal for these areas is improving building appearance and landscaping. Potential areas for Business Redevelopment are the north side of Northwestern Highway at Fourteen Mile Road; the west side of Orchard Lake Road between Twelve and Thirteen Mile Roads; Ten Mile at Orchard Lake Road, adjacent to the City of Farmington; and along Grand River, east and west of Middlebelt to Eight Mile Road.

One area is identified for Industrial Redevelopment. It is along Eight Mile Road from the City of Farmington municipal boundary east to Middlebelt Road. Like the Business Redevelopment

areas, this is an older industrial area in need of upgrading. Expanding uses allowed in the Industrial Zoning District and creating an Overlay District to permit flexibility in unloading areas, off-street parking requirements, and nonconforming building development are tools recommended to rehabilitate this area.

It should be noted that where height is recommended to increase in any of these non-residential redevelopment areas, the master plan does indicate the need for added setbacks from adjacent residential areas. Other considerations pertinent to all the districts relate to better storm water management and increased use of access management techniques. The creation of overlay zoning districts will allow the City to target regulation changes to specific geographic areas only.

One final classification is called Special Planning Areas with Area-wide Redevelopment Potential. These are existing residential areas that could change to non-residential use but only if all or almost all of the residential uses are acquired so no isolated residential parcels remain. The area surrounding Botsford Hospital in the far southeastern corner of the City is a special case with such potential. The plan identifies the need for hospital expansion in a planned fashion, so remaining homes are not burdened with extra through traffic. The three other areas identified for Area-Wide Redevelopment Potential are the east side of Orchard Lake Road between Thirteen and Twelve Mile Roads, Glen Oaks Subdivision next to Glen Oaks County Park, and Indianbrook Subdivision south of I-696 off Halsted.

The master plan concludes with a chapter on implementation. A description of tools available to the Planning Commission, such as the cluster option, Planned Unit Development (PUD) option, and Capital Improvements Plan are provided. A new tool recommended in the plan is the overlay zoning district that would allow special standards to be applied to certain geographic areas where redevelopment is desired. These standards could encourage mixed-use developments by allowing condominiums or apartments to be part of retail/office mixed-use projects or could increase the maximum permitted height in certain areas.

Future Land Use Map

The visual representation of the City's policies is shown on the Master Plan for Future Land Use map (attached). As the City is mainly built out, the Future Land Use map essentially mirrors the existing land use map with some exceptions.

The largest planned land use is single family residential. Two classifications of Single Family Residential are shown on the map; Single-Family Residential and Single-Family Cluster. A separate map shows residential densities based on existing zoning districts. Residential densities are described by the following four terms: Low, Low-Medium, Medium, and High Density. Most of the residential land is classified as Low-Medium Density Residential. This translates to the RA-1, RA-2, and RA-2B Residential Zoning Districts, which have a density range of 1.3 to 2.0 dwelling units per acre and minimum lot sizes ranging from 16,500 to 26,000 square feet. Medium Density Residential refers to some of the older housing in the City with minimum lot sizes ranging from 8,500 to 12,500 square feet. Medium Density Residential is mainly located in the southeast corner of the City near the City of Farmington and around Botsford Hospital, and to the west of the "tail" of the City of Farmington between Eight and Nine Mile Roads.

High Density reflects Multiple Family Zoning Districts and is shown as Multiple-Family Residential on the Future Land Use map. Multiple-Family Residential is located in numerous areas. The largest areas of Multiple-Family Residential are on Fourteen Mile Road at Orchard Lake Road, along Twelve Mile Road and I-696, and on Grand River north of the City of Farmington.

Several Commercial, Office, and Industrial classifications are shown on the Future Land Use map. The following designations are used:

1. Non-Center Type Business
2. Shopping Center Type Business
3. Expressway Service
4. Small Office
5. Large Office
6. Industrial-Research-Office
7. Industrial

Key corridors for commercial and office uses are Northwestern Highway, Orchard Lake Road, the south side of Twelve Mile Road, and Grand River Avenue. Industrial-Research-Office is mainly planned north of the I-696/I-275 interchange, while Industrial uses are mainly planned along I-275 and on the north side of Eight Mile Road.

While the map differentiates between commercial, office, and industrial uses of varying intensities, missing from the master plan text is any description of these classifications. This leaves the reader of the plan with questions on what are the distinctions between the categories. The 1996 Future Land Use map uses these same classifications, and the 1996 master plan does contain descriptions of these classifications but it is unlikely that readers will have access to the 1996 plan. Therefore, Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff highly recommends that the Farmington Hills Planning Commission review these previous descriptions to see if they still accurately reflect current thinking, make refinements if necessary, and then add these descriptions to the text of this master plan update.

The Future Land Use map also shows the locations of recreational and institutional uses but has a variety of classifications to describe them. Recreational spaces are classified as Private Recreation, Major Park, or Neighborhood Park. The Community Facilities classification is inclusive covering a wide range of uses including the municipal complex at Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake Road, the OCC Orchard Ridge Campus, Botsford Hospital, and Glen Oaks County Park. Quasi-Public and School sites are separately shown on the map.

Comparison of the draft 2008 Future Land Use map to the 1996 map

The same Future Land Use classifications are used on both maps so a direct comparison is possible. Due to the developed nature of the community, only a few changes are proposed.

Some changes are small scale like a change from Large Office to Small Office for a few parcels on the south side of Twelve Mile Road, east of Orchard Lake Road, or a change from Single-Family Residential to Office for three parcels along Eight Mile Road at Metroview Street. Other changes relate to areas now being planned for Single-Family Cluster based on the analysis of

residential redevelopment areas. The two areas of Single-Family Cluster along Inkster Road at both Ten Mile and Nine Mile Roads fall into this category of change. The change of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher site at Twelve Mile and Inkster from Quasi-Public to Single-Family Residential is also based on the residential property analysis.

Another change from the 1996 map is the elimination of the Special Planning Area designation. On the 1996 map, a few areas like the Grand River corridor or Northwestern Highway at Fourteen Mile Road were outlined in black but no future land use classifications were shown for these areas. These areas were then described elsewhere in the master plan text. Now, future land use designations are applied to all parcels. In the draft plan, additional maps outline areas with redevelopment potential; goals and policies are provided for further guidance on the type of redevelopment envisioned for each area.

Coordination with Surrounding Community Boundaries

Under state law, the county's review is required to include a statement indicating whether the proposed plan is "inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township" that received notice of the draft plan. The following provides detail on how the draft plan coordinates with each of Farmington Hills' neighboring communities.

North Boundary – West Bloomfield Township: The Charter Township of West Bloomfield 2005 Master Land Use Plan Update was adopted in July 2005. Farmington Hills shares its entire northern border along Fourteen Mile Road with West Bloomfield Township. Residential is planned by both communities for much of this border except at some key intersections. At Haggerty, West Bloomfield has planned for Shopping Center-Retail. Likewise, Farmington Hills has planned for Shopping Center Type Business at the corner with Multiple-Family Residential surrounding the shopping center. From this point east for three miles to Farmington Road, both communities are mainly residential. West Bloomfield has planned for Low Density Single Family (up to 2.5 dwelling units per acre) with a large parcel of Multiple Family at Halsted and a small parcel of Non-Center Retail at Farmington Road. Farmington Hills has planned for Single-Family Residential with a small area of Quasi-Public at Drake Road and a small area of Small Office at Farmington Road.

Between Farmington and Middlebelt Roads, both communities have planned for more intensive uses, especially at Orchard Lake Road, which is also the terminus of Northwestern Highway. In this location, commercial and multiple family are planned both north and south of Fourteen Mile Road, west of Orchard Lake Road. The type of commercial planned is quite similar since the classification in Farmington Hills is Shopping Center Type Business, and the West Bloomfield classification is Shopping Center-Retail. This area is the gateway into both communities, and a roundabout is proposed at this intersection. To the east of Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills has more intensive uses planned for the south side of Fourteen Mile Road (Industrial-Research-Office, Multiple-Family Residential, and School). This portion of Orchard Lake Road is planned for the Town Center of West Bloomfield. Farmington Hills has identified redevelopment opportunities in this area as well, both Mixed-Use Development (along the east side of Orchard Lake Road) and Business Redevelopment (along Fourteen Mile Road). Therefore, what is envisioned in this area would complement the Town Center district planned in West Bloomfield.

The remainder of the border is mainly residential except for Small Office and Shopping Center Type Business planned at Middlebelt by Farmington Hills; Civic Facilities and One Story Office are planned by West Bloomfield for this intersection.

Northeast Boundary – Village of Franklin: The Master Plan Village of Franklin was adopted in January 2007. The City of Farmington Hills and the Village of Franklin share a mile and a half border along Inkster Road from Fourteen Mile Road south to Northwestern Highway. Other than a parcel of Small Office planned along Northwestern in Farmington Hills, this is a very compatible border. Farmington Hills is planning for Single Family Residential along this border with a large parcel of Private Recreation (Franklin Hills Country Club) at Thirteen Mile Road. Franklin is planning entirely for single family residential of varying densities, ranging from 22,500 to 65,000 square foot lot sizes.

East Boundary – City of Southfield: The City of Southfield Master Plan Executive Summary is dated November 1988; however the Future Land Use Plan map is undated. Farmington Hills shares its eastern border with the City of Southfield along Inkster Road from Northwestern Highway south to Eight Mile. Farmington Hills has this eastern boundary mainly planned for either Single-Family Residential or Single-Family Cluster. Exceptions to this are at Northwestern Highway where Small Office is planned; at I-696 where Small Office is planned for the area north of the expressway; on the south side of Ten Mile Road where Quasi-Public is planned; and at Eight Mile Road where Non-Center Type Business is planned. The Southfield Future Land Use Plan map shows much of this border is also planned for Single Family Residential. Exceptions to this are Commercial/Office at Northwestern Highway; Mixed Use and Institutional on the south side of I-696; Commercial, Commercial/Office, and Office/Research on the south side of Eleven Mile Road; a small area of Multiple Family Residential on the south side of Nine Mile Road; and Commercial along Eight Mile Road. While the border is not entirely consistent, the Future Land Use maps represent existing conditions, and there is general compatibility at the border.

South Boundary – City of Livonia: The City of Livonia's Future Land Use map, referenced from the City's web site, was last amended in February 2005. Farmington Hills shares its entire southern border with the City of Livonia along Eight Mile Road. From I-275 east to Gill Road, Eight Mile has more of a residential nature in both communities. In Farmington Hills, less intensive uses of Single-Family Residential, Major Park, and Multiple-Family Residential are planned for the north side of the road. In Livonia, Low Density Residential (1 to 5 dwelling units per acre), Nature Preserves, and Community Service are planned for the south side of the road. Between Gill and Farmington Roads, the uses become a little more intense with Small Office and Non-Center Type Business planned for the Eight Mile Road frontage in Farmington Hills, and Medium Density Residential (4 to 14 dwelling units per acre) and General Commercial planned in Livonia.

From the municipal limits of the City of Farmington east to Inkster Road, the uses along Eight Mile Road become much more intensive in both communities. Farmington Hills has Industrial, Shopping Center Type Business, Non-Center Type Business, and Multiple-Family Residential planned along the north side of Eight Mile. Similarly, Livonia has Industrial, General Commercial, and Office planned for the south side. Overall, the boundary is fairly compatible

between these two communities; as uses get more intense going east, they correspondingly increased in intensity on both sides of Eight Mile Road.

West Boundary – City of Novi: The City of Novi Master Plan for Land Use 2004 was adopted in December 2004 and just amended in April 2008 (MP 08-02). Farmington Hills shares its entire western border with the City of Novi along Haggerty Road from Fourteen Mile to Eight Mile Roads. Between Fourteen and Twelve Mile Roads, Farmington Hills has planned primarily for Single Family Residential. Exceptions to this are an area of Shopping Center Type Business and Multiple Family Residential south of Fourteen Mile Road and an area of Small Office just north of Twelve Mile Road. Along this portion of the boundary, Novi has planned entirely for Office. The residential subdivisions are existing but some of the planned office land remains vacant. Therefore, attention to site details, such as buffering, landscaping, and access should be considered by the City of Novi Planning Commission to minimize any impacts on the adjacent residential when office developments are proposed.

Between Twelve Mile Road and I-696, Farmington Hills shows a strip of Large Office just south of Twelve Mile, then Industrial-Research-Office to I-696. Novi has planned for a mixture of uses in this area, Community Commercial, Office, Utility, and Mobile Home Park. These uses are primarily compatible except for the Mobile Home Park classification, which reflects an existing condition.

South of the expressway interchange in a narrow corridor between Haggerty Road and I-275, Farmington Hills has planned for Non-Center Type Business, Industrial, Large Office, Shopping Center Type Business, Quasi-Public, and finally Expressway Service at the south end of the border near Eight Mile Road. In this area Novi has planned for Light Industrial, Community Commercial (in the Grand River, Ten Mile area), Single and Multiple Family Residential, Office, and Regional Commercial at Eight Mile Road. All uses are generally compatible except for a small area of Single Family Residential in Novi across from an Industrial area in Farmington Hills, both of which are existing uses.

Given the existence of I-696 and I-275 along this border, it is not surprising that the most intensive uses planned by both communities are found in this area. There is general compatibility of uses since similar uses are taking advantage of access to and visibility on these key expressways.

Novi Planning staff undertook a detailed review of Farmington Hills' draft master plan and possible impacts on Novi. Based on this review, the Chairman of the City of Novi Planning Commission sent a letter suggesting *“that the City of Farmington Hills consider instituting building design element requirements and 100 foot minimum setbacks from residential properties in their taller building standards to mitigate the impact of taller buildings on neighboring properties, as has been done in the City of Novi, and improve Haggerty Road before development is allowed to intensify adjacent to it.”*

Internal Boundary – City of Farmington: The Master Plan City of Farmington was adopted in February 1998 and amended in October 2004 with a Downtown Plan. Farmington Hills completely surrounds the City of Farmington except for that portion of Eight Mile Road where

Farmington is adjacent to the City of Livonia. In reviewing the whole perimeter of Farmington, there is general compatibility with the planned uses in Farmington Hills.

At the northwest corner of the City of Farmington, along Grand River Avenue, both communities have intensive uses planned. Farmington Hills has a large area of Multiple-Family Residential with some Large Office, Shopping Center Type Business, and Non-Center Type Business on Grand River between Halsted and Gill Roads. Farmington has General Commercial, Multiple Family Housing, and Neighborhood Commercial along this same frontage with a small area of Single Family Residential. Both communities then have Single Family Residential to Orchard Lake Road. Along Orchard Lake Road, Farmington has Neighborhood Commercial at Ten Mile Road while Farmington Hills has Non-Center Type Commercial. The rest of this frontage is either Single Family Residential or Public/Quasi-Public in Farmington, while Farmington Hills has Small Office for the rest of their shared frontage along Orchard Lake Road. The remainder of the eastern border of Farmington continues to be compatible as Single Family Residential is planned in both communities.

The consistency continues for the southern part of the City of Farmington. Commercial is planned along Grand River in both communities, and Multiple Family is planned along Nine Mile Road in both communities. The “tail” or southern extension of the City of Farmington is surrounded by similar uses. The Industrial at Nine and Eight Mile Roads is adjacent to Industrial in Farmington Hills, while the General Commercial on the west side of the “tail” is adjacent to Non-Center Type Business in Farmington Hills. The rest of the border north of Freedom Road is generally compatible as well with Multiple next to Multiple.

However, there are two areas along this part of the southern border where industrial is adjacent to single family residential. One area is on Nine Mile Road, west of Farmington Road to Gill Road, where Industrial in Farmington is adjacent to Single Family Residential in Farmington Hills. This represents an existing condition. The other is where Single Family Residential in Farmington is adjacent to Industrial in Farmington Hills at Freedom Road and Halsted. Here the right-of-way of Freedom Road (M-5) provides a buffer for the residential uses.

Boundary with county property: Glen Oaks County Park on Thirteen Mile Road is classified as Community Facilities on the Future Land Use map. Planned classifications surrounding the golf course generally represent existing land uses; single family residential to the east and west, neighborhood park to the northwest, multiple family to the south, and multiple family and commercial to the north. The classifications as shown on the map are compatible with county property.

It should be noted that two areas near Glen Oaks County Park have been identified in the plan for possible redevelopment. The first is a Special Residential Planning Area just to the southeast of the county park on the south side of Thirteen Mile Road. Here an opportunity exists for ten large lot residential parcels to be subdivided into approximately 37 home sites, if the existing homes were to be acquired. This potential redevelopment would have no impact on county property and would maintain the existing residential character to the east.

The second redevelopment opportunity has the potential for greater impact on county property, as it is adjacent to the golf course. The Glen Oaks Subdivision to the west of the county park to Orchard Lake Road is identified as an Area-wide Redevelopment site. *“If all of the area could be changed to a mixed-use development, it would be an ideal land use pattern because of its size and isolation from other one-family residential areas. Change would have to take place at one time and include the entire residential neighborhood.”* (Pages 85 and 86) The plan identifies the need for increased landscaping and open space to be part of a mixed-use proposal. If something of this magnitude were to be proposed, Oakland County Parks and Recreation should be involved to ensure that there would be no negative impact on the golf course from the new development.

Analysis

Due to the rapid development that occurred in Farmington Hills, mainly from the 1960s and into the 1990s, there is little vacant land left in the City. For growth to occur, redevelopment will need to take place. During the preparation of this master plan, the planning commission, staff, and planning consultant systematically reviewed existing land use to identify parcels that are either vacant or underutilized to ascertain redevelopment opportunities. It appears that they also made good use of the findings from the Redevelopment Committee and the Sustainability Report because the most outstanding feature of this master plan is the level of detail provided in describing these redevelopment opportunities. The residential analysis is parcel specific and provides valuable information to property owners and perspective developers about the number of lots and type of development allowed (subdivision or cluster). In some cases, schematic drawings conceptually show how streets could be arranged to preserve natural resources. Accompanying maps clearly identify where these residential redevelopment sites are located; therefore neighboring home owners also are alerted to the potential for increased density if property owners choose to exercise this potential.

The non-residential redevelopment portion of the master plan goes into similar detail, describing the desired character of each of the redevelopment categories. The goals and policies prepared for each redevelopment area are not generic but reference specific conditions related to that site and its surrounding uses, thereby giving additional guidance to property owners. A number of tools are recommended to encourage redevelopment. They include overlay districts, expanded height limitations, additional permitted uses in certain zoning districts, and increased flexibility for some of the older developed areas. Next steps for the Planning Commission will be to develop the actual zoning language to implement these recommendations. It should be noted that the City of Novi offered comments on the potential for increased height allowances for the I-696 and I-275 Freeway Redevelopment Areas. Hopefully, when the Farmington Hills Planning Commission develops actual standards, they will consider the comments offered by the City of Novi.

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission, staff, and planning consultant should be commended for the time and effort they took to prepare a plan with such a strong redevelopment focus. Many master plans only provide a broad brush overview of potential redevelopment areas. This plan does more than just acknowledge the need for redevelopment; this plan demonstrates the City’s commitment to make it happen.

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services (PEDS) staff feels this is a strong master plan that should guide the City into the future. We did notice though that the descriptions of the future land use classifications were missing from the master plan text, and we recommend they be included in the text as mentioned in the “Future Land Use Map” portion of this review.

PEDS staff also recommends that updated population forecasts be included in this plan. Since the time the Farmington Hills draft master plan was submitted for comment in mid-March, SEMCOG has released a new version of its Regional Development Forecast. This forecast looks at population projections to the year 2035. The new forecast differs from the 2030 numbers in that there is now a small increase forecasted for Farmington Hills. The new forecast shows a 2030 population for Farmington Hills to be 81,636, compared to the 76,823 previously forecasted for 2030 and cited in the draft master plan. The 2035 forecast is for a population of 82,535. It is recommended that before the master plan is adopted, these new numbers be included in the plan.

Finally, it would be helpful to the reader if other findings from the Sustainability Study were summarized in the plan. The plan indicates that the Sustainability Study focused on the financial, social, and environmental aspects of the City. The master plan does identify recommendations from the Sustainability Study related to non-residential redevelopment. However, it would be interesting to see if recommendations were made for neighborhood improvements as well. The master plan does not address housing quality. While much of the City’s housing stock is fairly new, there are some older areas where housing condition may be an issue. Strategies to address blight may be needed, and this could be useful information to add into the master plan.

From an environmental focus, the plan does a good job at explaining the ecological functions of natural features like woodlands and wetlands. The Oakland County Green Infrastructure Visioning Project is referenced in the plan, although a greenways plan is not included in this master plan update. Farmington Hills has an impressive network of open spaces within existing subdivisions. Due to the application of open space provisions in the City’s zoning ordinance, over 1,000 acres of land have been permanently preserved for the enjoyment of city residents. Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff invites the City’s planning staff to meet with us to share their success story and identify ways to link these spaces into a countywide vision.

Conclusion

Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services staff commends Farmington Hills for preparing this new Master Plan.

Based on the review of the surrounding communities’ master plans, the City of Farmington Hills Master Plan for Future Land Use 2008 is **not** inconsistent with the plan of any city, village, or township that received notice of the draft plan.

Oakland County has not prepared a countywide development plan, so there is no countywide plan to which to compare the plan.

Sincerely,

Charlotte P. Burckhardt, AICP, PCP
Principal Planner

Enclosures