

FINAL
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
****SPECIAL** PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday, February 6, 2023
2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Parel called the Special meeting to order at 5:30pm.

ROLL CALL: Present: Brian Parel, Chairperson
Brian Winkler, Vice Chairperson
Bill McKeever
Sam Karim
Joe Loskill
Brady Phillips
Absent: George Weber (excused)
Also Present: Dave Campbell, Township Planning Director
Paula Lankford, Planner
Mark Gall, Township Fire Marshal
Jill Bahm, Partner, Giffels Webster
Rose Kim, Staff Planner, Giffels Webster
Julia Upfal, Planner, Giffels Webster

B. APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

MOTION by Loskill, supported by Winkler, to approve the Planning Commission Special Meeting Agenda of February 6, 2023, as presented.

C. MASTER LAND USE PLAN REVIEW

Work session of the 2015 Master Land Use Plan update focusing on the Commercial Center area.

The Giffels Webster team shared a PowerPoint on the overhead.

Rose Kim – We’re going to be getting into the area plans portion of the Master Plan. We’re going to be starting with the designated commercial center area of Commerce, so just a quick overview of area plans and we did have a summary for you in our memo. Our purpose in doing the area plans is going to be addressing special areas within the community that require some additional focus and attention, and including specific recommendations and separate goals for how the area show grow and develop. This will help us accomplish broader Master Plan goals which we’ll be going over for you later.

This is a rough view of the boundaries of both the northern end, including Cooley Lake to the north, Haggerty Road to the east, and around the Richardson Center, right above Oakley Park, and then around Carey Road to the west.

The rough boundaries of the commercial center to the north are parts of Pontiac Trail, around Library Drive and Barrington Drive, the eastern boundary would also be Haggerty Road, the southern boundary at 14 Mile and the western around the community of Walled Lake.

For the commercial center, we have these three opportunity sites; Williams International, the Beaumont property, and the Rock Road properties. Some of the notable landmarks in the commercial center would be M-5, the pedestrian bridge, the Airline Trail, the M-5 Metro Trail, the M-5 and Pontiac Trail roundabouts, Robert H. Long

Park, and it also contains the Oakland County Wastewater Treatment Plant. The idea with the area plans would be to be able to build upon the assets that are in Commerce in the commercial center.

Some of the key strengths here are:

- Visibility and being a connector for the region
- The trail network, which ideally would allow for pedestrianized access to the broader region
- Enabling the flow of traffic
- Proximity to neighboring communities
- Hopefully building on what the DDA is doing and plans for the downtown
- Being able to attract new business

Some of the challenges:

- We've talked about traffic quite a bit, so that's something that we'll be trying to address
- Limitations for pedestrians and nonmotorized transportation users; the difficulty in crossing M-5 and Pontiac Trail can make it difficult for users to get to place in the commercial center, as well as beyond
- Environmental challenges that could hinder the redevelopment of the sites we're looking at
- Commercial uses tend to be auto-oriented.

In terms of how some of the public engagement that we've received so far addresses some of these issues; there is some dissatisfaction with the fact that development hasn't moved forward on the properties and that they have been vacant for so long. There seemed to be a sense of support for a greater mix of housing types and commercial uses in the area.

Residents are definitely open to seeing trails expanded and increasing access to trails and other places in the area. Of course, traffic is a consideration and trying to limit it to the commercial center.

Phillips – What was the forum or the method, how did you get the feedback?

Rose Kim – Just generally a sense of the different types of feedback that we got. We did discuss it a little more in-depth at the previous meeting. Feedback included the Open House, the Online Open House afterwards, and the meeting toolkits.

Jill Bahm – In addition, we just finished our third discussion with the kids at Walled Lake Northern. The idea about more things to do and trail connectivity, that may be different depending on where you are in your age bracket, what you find useful in terms of things to do, but this is an opportunity that we can be talking about where we might be able to encourage more of that activity, and then have people be able to get there.

Rose Kim – This offers some regional context about where the commercial center is and some of the things that are happening at its borders or nearby. The West Bloomfield Master Plan includes recommendations for the Haggerty Road Corridor to encourage a complementary mix of uses. Their housing study in 2019 indicated that there may be a surplus of single-family residential and a shortage of multi-family units.

Walled Lake is projected to grow a little bit significantly than West Bloomfield by 2045. There is potential redevelopment opportunity for the Walled Lake School site on the other side of Pontiac Trail and Maple.

Wolverine Lake's Master Plan also includes recommendations to have more mixed use in the area, and also includes a nonmotorized plan with proposed pathways, which is important in thinking about how we can consider the trails and pathways to other communities.

In Novi, they're also working on a nonmotorized plan and a Master Plan update. They're still relatively early in the process, but their most recent draft does identify some potential opportunities in a larger map which had some new potential developments identified, but it is largely developed. You can see on the map their three sites that have been identified, and one is adjacent to the commercial center. I'm not quite sure about the properties to the east of M-5, but for that southwest corner, that's the Orchard Grove Church property and right now I believe some developers are proposing to change the future land use from R-A to a lower density multi-family to provide some buffering from the residential.

Dave Campbell – Did you say they're petitioning to lower the density.

Rose Kim – Raise it, from single-family to a low-density multi-family. Some recent development is happening in West Bloomfield and Novi, some assisted living facilities, some early childhood and educational.

This map isn't great but you can see a little bit of the development happening nearby with a lot of single-family housing.

Chairperson Parel – If I'm seeing this correctly, it looks like the new apartment development on this map, which includes several cities, are all pretty much limited to Commerce Township. Is all the red Commerce Township?

Rose Kim – Yes.

Chairperson Parel – So every new development that is an apartment ...

Jill Bahm – This is just the commercial center area outlined, so it's not showing you all of Novi or West Bloomfield.

Chairperson Parel – Where it's showing yellow dots, in that entire area, the only place where new development apartments are going is in Commerce Township?

Jill Bahm – Yes.

Loskill – Is that because the availability of land is only in Commerce Township? Wolverine Lake and Walled Lake are pretty built up.

Jill Bahm – I would say it's probably available land and access. That's right along M-5 so that provides people with easy access to work centers in the area. Some of the other communities may not have accessibility. There are other apartments if we go a little further east into Farmington Hills. There is at least one, and potentially another if approved, along Orchard Lake and Northwestern. There are things happening in other places where there's a little bit more activity and access.

Rose Kim – And keep in mind this is just from 2021, so there might have been some new development happening in 2022.

Chairperson Parel – Dave, do we know what adjacent cities and townships are doing in regard to future apartment developments and potential limitations?

Dave Campbell – I haven't heard of any moratoriums for apartments. I know West Bloomfield has or had something of a moratorium on assisted living. They were trying to determine what the appropriate approach was to assisted and senior living facilities that they were seeing. Commerce Township doesn't get notified every time a community has a site plan for an apartment development. We do get notified if somebody wants to rezone for multi-family. I haven't heard what sort of push other communities have been getting for multi-family other than what I read on more of a regional or nationwide level that there is a shortage of multi-family housing.

Julia Upfal – Looking at some of the zoning maps, Wolverine Lake is almost entirely single-family residential. There are very few areas for commercial zoning at all. And Walled Lake is having some discussion about the site at Pontiac and Maple for mixed use with potentially some multi-family. I don't think the discussions are only taking place here.

Dave Campbell – Maybe it didn't get picked up because of the year that this data is pulled from, but Walled Lake has a trio of 3-story apartment buildings on the south side of Pontiac Trail and Decker. Those look like they're about ready to be occupied, so I suppose that would be one more red dot on that map if it were recent enough to include it.

Chairperson Parel – Can we go back to Slide 7? I just want to make sure I understand that. You mentioned that West Bloomfield anticipates growth of 5% in the next 22 years, Walled Lake is 10%, Wolverine Lake is 1%, and ours is 2%. That was just interesting to me, and then also on the next slide, another point that was interesting to me, Novi's Master Plan and Nonmotorized Plans are underway right now. Are you doing theirs too?

Jill Bahm – We're not doing theirs, but we did Novi's last Master Plan, and they also have a standalone Nonmotorized Transportation Plan. So, they have two plans that I think are going through the process. The Master Plan is underway. The Nonmotorized was started recently. They're being done separately.

Chairperson Parel – Did we do our Nonmotorized in 2015 too? But then it never really got implemented?

Jill Bahm – You do have a map.

Chairperson Parel – We do have a map that shows it.

Dave Campbell – Our Nonmotorized Plan has always been within our Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Part of our hope is for that to migrate over to the Land Use Master Plan.

Chairperson Parel – That's our hope with this project.

Jill Bahm – Right. I just recalled, there are two other projects, multi-family apartments in West Bloomfield, on Orchard Lake Road north of 14 Mile Road. One was constructed last year, and another that I think has just been approved. They have not updated their Master Plan in several years and I believe they are talking about doing one sometime this year.

Chairperson Parel – I would just be interested to see how Novi is implementing their new Nonmotorized Plan. I don't know if they're becoming any more successful than we were when we did ours almost 10 years ago.

Jill Bahm – I do know that they have a dedicated commission or committee that's involved with identifying improvement areas, keeping track of segments that are updated and where improvements are needed as it relates to nonmotorized.

Dave Campbell – Novi actively builds sidewalks and pathways, the city does, rather than waiting for the developers to do it. That's a key difference, and because they're a city, they have more of an ability to do so.

Jill Bahm – And many of their subdivisions were built with sidewalks too.

Rose Kim – Back to that 2015 Master Plan and some of the areas it identified, including Commerce Town Center, which was DDA owned in 2015 and is now Five & Main, and recommending a mix of uses with a unified development plan. Then the Haggerty Road Corridor, that would also contain more of the area that we're looking at, recommends high-quality design and parking behind the buildings to improve the appearance of the high visibility area. I'll hand it off to Julia to go over some of what we're looking to do for the commercial center.

Julia Upfal – From here on, we're trying to get more of your input after we've gone through the background, and we're going to do that in the framework of the guiding principles for the Master Plan. These are the guiding principles that we've already talked about, and on the forthcoming slides there are a few questions related to each of the guiding principles for the Planning Commission to consider and discuss to start to flesh out exactly what they want to see in the commercial center and what they want the commercial center to look like, feel like, what regulations are important there, what developments are desired. Then we will funnel down a little bit more into those opportunity sites and talk about development there as well and what considerations the Planning Commission has.

The first three guiding themes that we wanted to talk about have to do with community character, community health, sustainability and resiliency. These are broad questions to get the discussion started, but perhaps looking at these questions that we have here under community character, I just wanted to hear if the Planning Commission has any thoughts with what they'd like that feel to be and what they think they can do to build that sense of place in the commercial center, if you have any ideas.

Chairperson Parel – Does anyone have any comments as it relates to that, as we're trying to get a feel for community character?

Jill Bahm – And we can come back to this too. These were framed to give you the idea. When Rose had the previous slide with what our Future Land Use Map showed from

2015, and talked about those uses, it talked about high-quality architecture, parking behind buildings and some of the uses, primarily heavier commercial and probably industrial, with some residential there. I think what this slide is trying to do, and thinking about the big picture of some of the adjacent communities and efforts they have been undertaking, is to think more broadly about not just each of these sites, but how they relate to the other things.

One of the early slides that Rose also showed were the assets in that area, so thinking about the downtown district, the bridge and the trails. Are there things that we should be thinking about here in this area? We could have the same idea in mind for those things, but are there other factors that we want to make sure we put in the plan so that if we need to have additional economic development efforts ... maybe we're doing more outreach and more targeted, or with some of our zoning standards, do we need to refine those to more accurately guide what we want those areas to look like in the future?

Chairperson Parel – I wonder if this might be a good slide for homework, as opposed to going through it now.

Dave Campbell – Mr. Parel, I think you and I had a good conversation earlier with respect to the sites within the commercial center; the Beaumont property, Williams International and the Rock Road property. I think you made a good comment to discuss with the Planning Commission, which is, if we consider the DDA district and the Martin Parkway corridor, and particularly the Five & Main project that we all hope will come to fruition, if we consider that something of a core, then one of the thoughts you expressed was having the uses within the commercial center exist to support that core as opposed to compete with it. If we look at what our vision is for the DDA district, and the Five & Main project particularly, to try to find uses that would be appropriate within the commercial center that would serve the uses within that core. Whether that's employment based uses, or office, or medical, where the folks who work there would then eat, shop and workout at the uses within the Five & Main development, rather than offer those same uses on those properties, which would effectively cannibalize one another. I thought that was an interesting perspective and I don't know if anyone else on the Planning Commission has thoughts in that regard.

Chairperson Parel – One of the examples I think we talked about was that we made a decision on this Commission almost a year ago when Barrington apartments came to us. They had two parcels of land that they were working to finalize which were previously approved commercial pieces. They asked if they could swap it back to residential and do multi-family. Some of our rationale in allowing that was the fact that directly across the street we're trying to launch a big retail area and we're not looking for competition. We didn't want to see vacant retail stores fighting for tenants. So Dave and I were talking about how that could potentially affect the Beaumont property, or Williams. One of the projects we've seen was a similar retail project with a car wash, apartments and many competing retail elements. If that's our focus, what can we do to drive support for that focus?

Dave Campbell – Or maybe think about what we saw in that concept plan for the Beaumont property in this context. What about that project does or does not fit in with some of these guiding principles. That was a very automotive-oriented proposal with several drive-through uses. Is that consistent with what we want the community

character to be, or is it inconsistent? If it is inconsistent, what would we consider to be consistent?

Jill Bahm – It's still our understanding that the Five & Main project is intentionally more of a walkable form.

Dave Campbell – It's changing every day, but yes, that's still the intention.

Loskill – It's not built so who knows what it will be eventually.

Dave Campbell – Yes, the intent is that it will still be a walkable, mixed-use downtown environment.

Chairperson Parel – It's interesting because the project we saw for Beaumont, as Dave commented that it's heavy automotive use if that were to come to fruition, but the developer still wanted to show it as a walkable community. You would have residents living there that would walk to some of the businesses, specifically the restaurants and drive-throughs; however, it's a different type of walkability than what is proposed at Five & Main. There's an art component at Five & Main, whether it's a theater or ...

Dave Campbell – Civic spaces.

Loskill – I'd like to see more of that implemented into these other big parcels that are available. Not to have so much land, but to have more walkable space and more green space so that they are more attractive environments and we're not maxing it out just to maximize the developer's profits.

Jill Bahm – Going from making it a place where people can walk to where they want to walk. I think that's the difference.

Loskill – Yes, make it look more inviting. We looked at the Beaumont proposal and that didn't look walkable. There was nothing there that said, *I want to hang out here and walk from this to this*. There were no interior pathways and there weren't a lot of trees. It was just a lot of automotive uses, drive-throughs. It would be a lot of traffic and it seems like it's the antithesis of being walkable.

Dave Campbell – You don't think you'd walk to the car wash?

McKeever – It reminded me of the outlots that you would find around a hotel development with drive-through chain restaurants and nothing that is village, or downtown, or inviting. It's just something off the freeway that's convenient if I have to stay here, and there's a couple restaurants. That's what it said to me.

Jill Bahm – Have you ever done that? You're driving somewhere on a road trip and you get off the highway and you get to the main road, and it's McDonald's, gas stations and Holiday Inn Express. For a moment you think, if I didn't know where I was how would I know? Maybe it's because I'm a planner, but this looks completely like every other place.

Julia Upfal – I think that brings us back to that discussion about sense of place and what's unique about the M-5 corridor? What makes you feel special about being in this area? Is it the gateway bridge? Is it the trails? How do you make sure that those assets continue to be valued and prioritized? How do you build off of them to ensure that this is a distinct area and that it doesn't just dissolve into that nowhere land?

Jill Bahm – A few months ago, I stopped at the Robert H. Long Park. I was going out there to take some pictures. There was a gentleman out there with a giant camera lens. Being a photographer of course, I'm immediately like, *oh, what kind of camera are you shooting with?* We had a conversation and it turned out, he was from Belleville. He stopped there because he was in the area and he had heard about the park. He had maybe been there once before, but it was just a place that he could find that was special and unique. He talked about the birds, and people go out there all the time to watch the birds. It's a known place for that. It's being aware of the assets of the area. You might not even realize how attractive they are for people outside the community as well as those inside the community, and how we can leverage that. Not to overwhelm it with more people from everywhere, but just to play off of that natural environment and welcoming space for people.

Julia Upfal – Moving through the guiding principles that are framing this discussion, we're also thinking about community health, active lifestyles, the recreational assets, but also what could be a deterrent to community health. How is traffic congestion bad for the community? What can we do to make sure that our community remains healthy now and, in the future, which of course brings us to sustainability and resiliency as well. How can we protect the commercial center for future generations? What areas should be prioritized for preservation and conservation? What areas are appropriate for future development.

Other guiding principles that we're going to be considering include growth management. That of course comes back to some of that traffic congestion, but also, what are the needs and what investments does the community need to make to support future development and how can an appropriate level of growth happen in Commerce Township with the services and infrastructural assets that exist currently?

As far as economic development goes, we should be considering what uses are allowed, what uses are desired, how can the highest and best use be achieved on the opportunity sites, and of course, how can we redevelop those sites to provide the greatest benefit for the community?

And one thing to consider with traffic mitigation is that it's not just additional houses, it's not just those additional rooftops that contribute to traffic; it's also those more auto-oriented uses. How can we find land uses that encourage people to drop off their car, spend the day in Commerce Township, walk around and get on those trails, and they're not always in their vehicles? How can we be strategic about things like traffic calming to ensure that the roads are safe for both people who are walking and driving, and they can be compatible at the same time. How can we build a complete, nonmotorized transportation network that also helps to encourage people to consider alternative options for transportation?

I know we've had some really good discussion about some of the uses that we'd like to see, but are there any other priorities that the Planning Commission wants out of the commercial center that they think should be informing policy-making, zoning or any other strategies that the Township could take, such as economic development

strategies in order to move forward and progress toward the area that they'd like to see?

Chairperson Parel – Those were all good questions and I know we've answered some of those as we look at the overall Master Plan. We talked about some things today, and I suggested that we could take it back as homework. How much do you need from us today? How do we get the answers that you're looking for?

Julia Upfal – Just to start with some conversation, based on the context and background that we've reviewed, to understand what the Planning Commission sees as their vision for the area and to come back with some language to align with that.

Discussion continued regarding next steps and supporting the commercial area. Jill Bahm that the draft Master Plan will have sections on these two areas with some ideas for the properties that are included within them. Those elements will be discussed as to what this commercial area will look like, how it will function and what's going to be there. In addition, how traffic will be addressed, looking at sustainability, and how to promote community character. Then, what needs to be done to implement the vision. Guiding language would be provided, such as making a new zoning district. Once the Master Plan is finished, it will include ideas and images.

Chairperson Parel – The guiding themes we are attempting to frame, we spent a little time on community character. Should we move onto to community health, or take it as homework?

Jill Bahm – Let's just talk about each item, and we can synthesize what we're hearing and bring it back.

Phillips – I'm stuck on community character. When does somebody get the car and say, "I'm going to Commerce Township. Let's go there because..." What's there? I look at Milford, Plymouth and Northville and some other areas where it has its own character, nice restaurants and events. Milford has lots of events. When does Commerce Township have that feel?

Loskill – I don't know if we're ever going to have that feel because we didn't develop that way. Milford and a lot of the cities you're mentioning, they started as a city and grew out. Commerce just kind of developed by spot and filled in the areas. There was never really any dedicated downtown area like you see in Milford and or Northville and places like.

Phillips – I understand that, but what's the vision? Do we want to be that?

Loskill – But is that what Commerce is?

Chairperson Parel – Brady, what you're speaking of is more of a downtown area with multiple businesses that you can walk to. If someone is going to Commerce Township, what are they going to visit? I think of Long's Farm. But it's different to say, *I'm going to Milford for the day*. I think we, as a community, made the decision to try to develop something like that with Five & Main.

Dave Campbell – I think the Five & Main development is what we're trying to achieve. A place where people say, *I want to go to that cool new downtown I heard about at M-5 and Pontiac Trail.*

Chairperson Parel – And spend an afternoon.

Dave Campbell – Now is it comparable to a downtown Rochester or Milford? No, it's a different animal, mostly because we don't have the history that those communities have, but I think that is the closest we can achieve as far as a downtown core, with a mix of uses, restaurants, civic spaces and so-forth.

Phillips – Is that a shared vision among this board?

Loskill – I think everybody would like that. Whether it's possible to do that is the question. Novi tried that and it never really felt like a downtown area because it was off to the side. It really didn't have that flow-through traffic to drive the development. My concern is that, while it's all well and good, is it going to be able to develop the draw power with this location? How do we encourage the development to be what we want it to be? It does have Haggerty and M-5, so we have the traffic flow around it, we just don't have traffic flow through it. If we can work to create that interest, that would help to pull everything into that area.

Dave Campbell – With that specific project, keep in mind that we have an approved PUD for that project. Some of you weren't even on the Planning Commission when it was approved because we're going back to 2017. But that is an approved project that for a lot of different reasons has not broken ground yet. The developer can tell you all about all of the different reasons, but there are plenty of us, myself, Deb, Mr. Winkler on the DDA, who are actively working to get that project off the ground. We had a meeting last week where we were trying to come up with some creative financing options to try to get cash flow to the developer to be able to break ground. I hope it is a vision that most of us share, and that it's an achievable vision to get that project off the ground.

Chairperson Parel – And while it's different than a downtown Milford, the plans I've seen and in speaking with the developer, they have some of the same intentions to create there, such as events, having a drink or dinner on the patio, and then going to see a movie in the park or something like that. They had holiday events in their courtyard, et cetera. I think that's always been the intention when we as a Township decided that instead of having our downtown in the Village, it's now going to be focused here.

Dave Campbell – Right, that's what we have all been working toward for as long as I've worked here. I kind of take it as a given that one way or another, we're going to make that project happen. That leads to the discussion of, what is the best vision for some of the big, developable properties that are in the vicinity of that project?

Julia Upfal – I think the other thing that becomes really important then is pedestrian access. How do you cross Pontiac Trail and M-5 at the roundabout? How do you make sure that it's safe for people? If you have the walkable destinations, how do people walk there?

Chairperson Parel – You're moving us into #2, community health.

Julia Upfal – I suppose I am.

Jill Bahm – If I could just go back a second. Another example you might know about is the Village of Rochester Hills. That was a former mall that was rehabbed into an outdoor mall. It kind of hits those downtown light buttons. What it doesn't have, that you do have, is the residential adjacent to it which I think will make it much more successful. I think the way this is being built out really makes sense. It gives you that concentration of people here that businesses really want. Thinking about this area as a whole, and again thinking back to those assets, how do we support activity in the downtown area? How do we plan in a way that makes the developer's investment there worthwhile, and vice versa? What else do they need to make this development successful that additional properties nearby can help support? I think more people, and I know that the first map with the red dots for apartments sounded concerning, but I think you should think of the red dots as opportunities to bring more people, more attention and more focus to this area, and it makes sense because you've got that access.

Chairperson Parel – I hadn't thought about that. The Village of Rochester Hills is the same developer that's proposing to develop here. I've been there and I think they have two department stores there.

Jill Bahm – I don't know how successful those are anymore, but they might be thinking, what else can we put in there? There are other things.

Chairperson Parel – And they have to draw the people as opposed to here, where we already have the people, and we have better access, and we have hindsight to be able to look at their property and decide how to do it better.

Jill Bahm – And some of the other unique features around there too. You have this property, the pathway, the nature preserve, the cool bridge. You have some iconic things in the area, so what else might people need?

Julia Upfal – And how do they complement?

Jill Bahm – That reminded me, when we think about not replacing Commerce Village as the downtown; if this is the intense commercial activity where we have a lot of the housing and businesses ... Next time we might start to talk about the north end. That will be a different kind of area for people to gather. When we talk about providing walkable destinations where people already live in single-family neighborhoods, so they don't have to get in their cars all the time. It's a foreshadowing of our discussions to come, but be thinking about Commerce Village and how it could also support the people who live in that area. It's not to compete with this area, but as a support.

Julia Upfal – I think something that was really illuminating when we talked to the high school students was asking them questions about where they can walk to and how often they walk around, and hearing how restrictive that is to them. Even if they don't live near Five & Main, they should be able to walk to the corner store, or walk to school, or the library. It's important to think about each of these areas.

Jill Bahm – And your older residents too.

Winkler – The thing about the Village of Rochester Hills is that it doesn't have a residential component. It's all commercial, but it is surrounded by single-family residential. The reality of Commerce Towne Place, that developer, he can't get the financing for the retail unless he has a residential component, and the residential gets built first before the retail. It's a conundrum because I know we're planning for 5 to 20 years down the road, but the Township Board has made it clear that they don't want to see any more multi-family, and it's almost a concession for Commerce Towne Place for that to have the multi-family component.

It's conundrum for the Beaumont site develop, but when the developer came through with a preliminary site plan, George said that residential component has to go or the Township Board isn't going to buy it. Maybe I've been on the Planning Commission too long, but I'm looking at reality with the conceptual process of updating the Master Plan. Maybe those conditions that exist today can hold back commercial development because of the need for the residential component. Maybe we will still be able to maintain the quality multi-family. I think the Board is scared of having some of these residential multi-family developments become the Village of Wixom, which we all know is not the most desirable type of development.

Dave, are all of the Rock Road properties owned by the same person?

Dave Campbell – Mostly, yes.

Winkler – So they're basically sublet sites. Is the Williams International site currently up for sale?

Dave Campbell – They go back and forth. They have a building at the southeast corner of Maple and Welch that they've been trying to sell or occupy. They upgraded it maybe 7 years ago. As to the rest of the campus, every now and then they come into the Township with a prospective buyer/developer, but it's always just tire-kicking. Williams International is still active over there. They're slowly migrating over to their new facility in Pontiac.

Winkler – Thank you, David.

Dave Campbell – If we are talking about the commercial center, and let's say particularly the Beaumont and Williams properties. In my mind, those properties deserve and are worthy of something of a destination use, whether it's for employment, education, recreation, entertainment, or some combination of those. If the Planning Commission were to agree with that thought, is that something that could be the basis for a Master Plan update?

Jill Bahm – Sure. If you think of what that might be, then I think one of your implementation items or strategies would be to develop an actual economic development plan or marketing plan to really sell that vision to the larger community. Then, if it makes sense and we're giving enough support around it, you might have a health campus with medical offices, and some residential for the doctors who want to live here, along with older residents who might want to live there to be close to their healthcare. They might need some recreation and trail access. We would be thinking about it from that bigger perspective. Thinking about the focus could be something to differentiate this area and avoid a piecemeal development.

Discussions continued regarding the concept of a health campus and potential components, the current zoning of Hospital, a lack of interest in the site for healthcare uses, undesirable uses for the site, and alternative uses. A health campus could include doctors' offices, manufacturing of healthcare products, medical suppliers, laboratories, gyms, health food stores, et cetera. Loskill wants to see a well-thought out concept for any type of development at these sites; parameters need to be defined. Phillips discussed going through an exercise to determine what the Planning Commission wants, what it does not want, and working through the process to establish the vision.

McKeever – If it were up to me, large parcels could remain vacant until the County straightens out the road problems and the issues we have with traversing the Township. Until then, why would we even consider opening that up to multi-family and filling that full of another 5,000 cars. The reason the large parcels are a concern to me is for the amount of traffic that they could generate, which is why I'm steadfast against even considering rezoning the Beaumont property because what it is right now is the safest thing it can be, unless you're going to make it a park. They asked us to zone it that, we rezoned it, and now I think they can live with it for a while until some of the issues that could support a big development get rectified within the Township.

Dave Campbell – With that, and with Mr. Phillips' question, my question back to you is are we talking about a homework assignment? Is it a worthy homework assignment for the Planning Commission members to come up with a "want" list and a "don't want" list for the commercial center?

Jill Bahm – Sure, I think that's a reasonable thing to do, and we can still be talking about things that you don't want, keeping in mind that people who own property do have the right to develop it. The challenge is to try to align the Township's vision with the realities of the marketplace. The idea about multi-family ... most of the north end, when we get to that part, we probably won't find as much or at least a similar thing in mind. There could be duplexes, triplex or quadplex. We could be talking about some attached single-family in certain areas, but if we're thinking of 2-story to 5-story apartment buildings, the commercial center area seems to not only be able to support it, because of the freeway access, but also because you've got some reasons for adding more people in that area. And, if you can offset the traffic concern with those connections for nonmotorized transit, and the ability for people to live, work and shop all in the same area, so they're not contributing to the traffic problem as much, then you start to build those synergies. That makes more sense if you're concentrating things in a certain area, and maybe lessening the impact of it elsewhere in the Township.

Julia Upfal – One of the questions we asked the high school students, it was more of a trivia question, was what they thought the average commute time was here in Commerce Township. It is 30 minutes, so finding uses that will help reduce people's commute time, keep them in Commerce Township and have their housing right nearby is actually going to help relieve some of the congestion.

Chairperson Parel – Is 30 minutes high or low?

Jill Bahm – It's a little high.

Julia Upfal – In the interest of time, I know we were talking about the commercial center more generally, but we've kind of started the discussions about the specific sites. I do have some background and context that will help that discussion so I want to run through that really quickly.

Jill Bahm – We will send these slides out to you also so you can go back and read through our comments.

Julia Upfal – The Rock Road property site; the site is currently zoned TLM, but it's also in the Haggerty Road Corridor Overlay, which means that developers have the option of whether to follow the TLM or HRC. The Overlay district offers more mixed-use opportunities, but has additional requirements for aesthetic issues like parking and landscaping. If it is under the Overlay district zoning at that specific site, there is the ability to go up 4 stories or 45' just because it is close to the intersection of M-5 and Pontiac Trail.

The future land use designation for this area is also TLM, and this is the information from the 2015 Master Plan for the future designation. There was an area plan for the HRC, which I believe resulted in that zoning district being adopted, and TLM was located in the Maple to Pontiac Trail area. On the next slide, I have this for all of the sites, these are some of the questions that we should be asking ourselves when we think about future development on these sites.

Jill Bahm – This is the Beaumont site. As we said, it is zoned Hospital facilities, and these are the standards that are associated with that. When we talk about the Future Land Use Map from 2015, and we're not necessarily suggesting that it has to all be scrapped as there might be elements you want to keep. These are here for background, what do we have and what could we have today.

The future land use designation here is Industrial, which is a little bit different than the zoning classification, and then they do the same list of questions. What uses would be compatible with the surrounding area? What uses would be undesirable? What can we do here that supports what we're doing in other parts of the community? And then priorities, and if there's any significant barriers to development, which we know there are on some of these properties.

Then Williams International, same thing, it's TLM and Industrial. I know we're keeping an eye on the clock here.

Julia Upfal – How did you end up with Industrial for the future land use designation for the Beaumont site in 2015?

Chairperson Parel – I wasn't here.

Dave Campbell – I would have to look up the history. My guess is that it was a carryover from prior Master Plans. It has been master planned Industrial for some time.

Jill Bahm – The hospital idea was well before 2015 wasn't it?

Paula Lankford – Yes, it was 2007. That has always been an Industrial area.

Jill Bahm – This was just a recap of the goals. I think we talked about these last time. They're included in there, along with our guiding themes. The next slide is all the same things that we've been talking about; the need for residential in tandem with our goals

for economic development, being mindful of infrastructure, community facilities and stewardship.

Julia Upfal – A quick recap of what I'm hearing from the Planning Commission is you see that the commercial center is going to be anchored by the Five & Main development and we want a mix of complementary uses in the area that will continue to serve that development and enhance Commerce Township as a distinct place worth visiting, and a destination. You want to see more destination type uses on the opportunity sites, fewer auto-oriented uses, less traffic congestion, and more walkability with more nonmotorized connections. You're not so concerned about the use that goes into those opportunity sites, but it's more the fact that you want a destination with a complementary mix of uses to go along with it.

Chairperson Parel – Yes, I think so. I don't know if I would say that we're not so concerned about the use, but one thing I want to make apparent is that we're not just looking to develop for the sake of developing. Bill gave the example of the Beaumont property which is zoned Hospital and unless something really wow's us, we're not just going to shove a bunch of drive-throughs and apartments in there.

Jill Bahm – What would wow you?

Chairperson Parel – Dave and I talked about this. Dave would really like to see a destination use there, something with recreation. I think that would be very cool. I also think some type of corporate headquarters, technology, light industrial building that has a beautiful front office, all glass. We talked about the Harmon building at 14 and M-5.

Dave Campbell – If you look at some of the new facilities that have been built along M-5 in the City of Novi, south of 14 Mile, I look at those and think, how do we get something of that scale on our side of 14 Mile along M-5?

Chairperson Parel – I don't know if those numbers work for the business deal. With the numbers they're asking, maybe it has to be high-density retail, but that's not what we're looking for, so they might need to adjust their expectations.

Dave Campbell – I did have a gentleman come in looking for potential sites for an event center, somewhere he could hold trade shows, but also that the space would be convertible and it could hold concerts up to 2,000 people. Now that doesn't do much for Mr. McKeever's concerns about traffic, but I thought something of that genre might make sense at either the Beaumont property or Williams International, something that moves the needle on a regional scale and brings people to a destination like that. Again, with the idea that after they leave whatever brought them to that destination, then they go to our downtown core for dinner and drinks afterward.

Chairperson Parel – I don't think the answer is a development that competes with Five & Main. We don't talk about competition here, but I think if that property in particular is going to be redeveloped, they would have to get it rezoned and we would have the authority to make that recommendation for the rezoning. Part of our basis would be there is a need, and we could weight it against some of the other developments that are in progress in the area, and that would make the decision for us.

Jill Bahm – Given that the Future Land Use Map currently identifies the Beaumont site as Industrial, that would be one of the things that a prospective developer could ask you for in rezoning, from Hospital to Industrial. Without substantiation in what we're doing now with the current Master Plan, it might be difficult to be expectant of that new applicant because we may not have that articulated well enough.

Discussion continued regarding rezoning and alternatives.

Jill Bahm – To remind you of our process, after we get through these ideas of what we like, what we don't like, along with some examples from other parts of the country where maybe we can find newer developments and what's happening around them. What were the spinoff activities, or what were the supporting uses that contribute to the success of those places? Then we have another opportunity to engage the community in that Open House.

Chairperson Parel – As we wind down, can your group tell us what we need to get to you before our next meeting?

Dave Campbell – If there is a homework assignment, can we summarize what it is?

Jill Bahm – Looking at the questions that were at the end of each of those sites. We will send you these slides. It might not necessarily be property specific, but just the commercial center in general if you looked at use considerations and site development. I think some of what we heard tonight was really helpful. We'll try to do some research and share that with you as well.

Julia Upfal – I do think the way that you framed that, talking about what you don't want to see in the area, sometimes that's easier to list.

Next Regular Meeting Date: February 6, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

D. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Loskill, supported by Phillips, to adjourn the meeting at 6:52pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Joe Loskill, Secretary