



A HERITAGE OF GOOD LIVING

2024 Planning Commission Annual Report

February 2025

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Introduction

The Lathrup Village Planning Commission plays a vital role in shaping the city's future by guiding land use decisions, reviewing development proposals, and ensuring compliance with local and state regulations. In accordance with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended), the Commission is required to prepare and present an annual report to the City Council. This document serves not only to fulfill that requirement but also to highlight the Commission’s accomplishments, key projects, and planning initiatives throughout 2024.

Comprised of seven members with expertise in architecture, business, finance, city planning, and education, the Planning Commission brings a diverse range of perspectives to its decision-making process. This collective knowledge ensures balanced, well-informed deliberations that support responsible growth and development in Lathrup Village. The Commission remains committed to fostering a sustainable, vibrant, and well-planned community while maintaining transparency and public engagement in all planning efforts.

2024 Planning Commission Roster (as of December 31, 2024)

The composition of the Planning Commission remained largely consistent with 2023, with the exception of Robert “Bo” Tamarelli, who was succeeded by Dennis Nordmoe.

Name	Term Ending
Jason Hammond, City Council Liaison	
Les Stansbery (Vice Chair)	2025
Wilbert Fobbs III (Secretary)	2026
Mark Dizik	2025
Tim Hillman	2027
Dennis Nordmoe	2027
James Scussel	2026

Community & Economic Development Department Staff

Austin Colson, Community & Economic Development Director

Thomas Kennedy, Community & Economic Development Intern

The City of Lathrup Village receives planning and zoning services through its partnership with Giffels Webster (GW). The GW team provides essential support to city staff by handling technical planning and zoning inquiries, including phone calls, emails, and in-person visits.

In addition to daily assistance, GW is responsible for preparing reviews, memoranda, and reports for the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), and City Council as needed. They also attend all Planning Commission meetings and participate in City Council meetings upon request.

The GW team is led by Jill Bahm, AICP, a partner at Giffels Webster, with support from Eric Pietsch, senior planner, and the GIS team, ensuring that the city's planning and zoning efforts are well-coordinated and effectively managed.

2024 Department Activities

Development Reviews

In 2024, the Planning Commission reviewed four (4) site plan review and two (2) special land use applications; Zoning Board of Appeals considered two (2) applications.

Site Plan Reviews. Site plan review takes place when an application is submitted for new construction, additions, and/or changes in use to ensure that development plans meet the standards of the Zoning Ordinance. These standards are primarily non-discretionary standards – these are objective standards such as setback, landscaping, lighting, and parking requirements.

Four site plans were reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2024. Two site plans accompanied a special land use request, one application is for a complete exterior renovation, one application is for a monument sign to accompany an approved Planned Unit Development (PUD) and the final one represents a change of use and one application is for the preservation of the city's former high school still under review by the Planning Commission. Site plan approvals are valid for twelve months, with a one-year extension permitted by the Planning Commission. These site plans included:

- 26727 Southfield Road – Special Land Use request for sale of alcoholic beverages.
- 27300 Southfield Road – Laundromat
- 27400 Southfield Road – Monument Sign (PUD)
- 27411 Southfield Road - Special Land Use request for sale of alcoholic beverages.
- 27700 Southfield Road – Preservation former high school and multi-family.
- 28317 Southfield Road – Golf simulator

Special Land Uses. Certain uses may be allowed in specific areas of the city through the special land use process, provided they meet established zoning standards. The Zoning Ordinance outlines both general and use-specific requirements for special land uses. While many of these standards are objective and non-discretionary, some involve discretionary elements that the Planning Commission evaluates during the review process.

A site plan must accompany all special land use applications, ensuring compliance with zoning requirements. The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing the site plan and making a recommendation to the City Council regarding the special land use request. There were two special land use requests submitted to the city in 2024, both were for the sale of alcoholic beverages.

Public Input/Public Hearings. The Planning Commission meetings are open to the public, and “public comment” is an agenda item at every meeting. Public hearings are required for PUD, special land use, and rezoning applications.

Zoning Updates

Staff worked on two amendments to the Zoning Ordinance this year but only one was presented to Planning Commission.

- **First Floor Residential.** The proposed ordinance change for the Village Center (VC) zoning district aims to permit multi-family residential uses on the ground floor, subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission. The Village Center District was designed to create a compact, pedestrian-friendly downtown that supports a mix of residential, retail, and office uses. By allowing residential units on the first floor, this amendment seeks to encourage redevelopment, enhance housing diversity, and promote a vibrant, active district while maintaining the district’s core walkability and mixed-use character. The change aligns with the city's planning goals and will be subject to specific standards to ensure it complements the overall vision for Lathrup Village’s downtown area.
- **Solar Energy and Battery Storage.** City staff have been collaborating with professors from the University of Michigan to develop a zoning amendment that will establish clear regulations for the installation of solar panels and battery storage systems in residential districts. This initiative aims to balance renewable energy adoption with neighborhood aesthetics and safety standards. The proposed amendment will provide guidance for residents on how to properly install solar panels while ensuring compatibility with existing zoning regulations. By creating a structured framework for solar energy systems, the city seeks to support sustainability efforts, promote clean energy, and assist homeowners in making informed decisions about solar installations.

Other Highlights

- The Community & Economic Development Department continues to have discussions about long-range improvements to Southfield Road with the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC).
 - The city’s Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is working with the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) to finalize the installation of HAWK (high-intensity activated crosswalk beacon) both north and south of I-696. The infrastructure for the HAWK signals north of I-696 has been installed and are expected to be operational in early 2025. The HAWK signal south of I-696 at Margate Avenue and Southfield Road is planned for installation in the summer of 2025. The DDA was successfully awarded a State Highway Safety Improvement Program grant to implement this project. The timeline for the southern installation accounts for project coordination and material availability.
 - A grant writer was secured through SEMCOG to draft an application for Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant funding.

While last year’s application was not successful, the DDA has since collaborated with the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) to develop a revised proposal for this funding opportunity. If awarded, this grant will support the first phase of the long-awaited Southfield Road Reconstruction project, spanning Meadowood Avenue to Cambridge Boulevard.

- The Community & Economic Development Department continues its collaboration with Main Street Oakland County (MSOC) to develop redevelopment strategies and provide organizational support. Additionally, in affiliation with the City of Southfield’s DDA and Oak Park’s Corridor Improvement Authority, the Tri-City Partnership works to support local business communities by offering educational workshops, seminars, and networking mixers throughout the year.

Meetings

Body	Number of Meetings
Planning Commission	7
Zoning Board of Appeals	2
Joint City Council, Downtown Development Authority & Planning Commission	0

The Year Ahead

The Comprehensive Plan includes zoning action strategies that recommend specific updates to the Zoning Ordinance to support the city's evolving needs. In 2024, significant progress was made on zoning amendments aimed at expanding housing options and promoting sustainability within Lathrup Village.

The Planning Commission will continue to hold public hearing on the proposed zoning amendment to allow first-floor residential use in the Village Center (VC) zoning district, supporting a more flexible and mixed-use development approach that encourages downtown revitalization while maintaining pedestrian-friendly design.

City staff plan to continue collaborating with professors from the University of Michigan to develop zoning regulations for the installation of solar panels and battery storage systems in residential districts. These new regulations provide clear guidance for homeowners on proper solar panel installation, ensuring compatibility with existing zoning requirements while promoting the city's commitment to sustainable energy solutions.

The Planning Commission will continue discussions on reevaluating parking regulations in commercial districts, with the goal of better supporting business growth and redevelopment. Additionally, there is a strong commitment to strengthening collaboration with the DDA, ensuring that new and existing business/property owners receive the necessary support to successfully redevelop commercial sites in the city.