



A HERITAGE OF GOOD LIVING

2023 Planning Commission Annual Report

February 2024

Prepared with Assistance by:

giffels 
webster

2023 Planning Commission Annual Report

Introduction

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008, as amended) requires the Planning Commission to prepare, file and present an annual written report to the City Council. This document is intended to meet the state requirement as well as provide an overview of 2023 accomplishments.

The Planning Commission in Lathrup Village is comprised of seven members. These members come from a variety of professional backgrounds in architecture, business, finance, city planning, and education. The various perspectives and knowledge brought by these members creates a well-rounded Commission that maintains fair and thoughtful deliberations.

2023 Planning Commission Roster - as of December 31, 2023

The Planning Commission experienced some turnover in late 2023, largely as the result of city elections. Mr. Hammond was elected to City Council, which compelled his resignation. He was then appointed to serve as the City Council Liaison, replacing Mayor Pro Tem Kantor. The resulting vacancy was not filled before the end of the calendar year.

Name	Term Ending
Jason Hammond, City Council Liaison	
Les Stansbery (Vice Chair)	2025
Wilbert Fobbs III (Secretary)	2026
Mark Dizik	2025
Robert "Bo" Tamarelli	2024
Krista McClure	2025
(vacant)	

Community & Economic Development Department Staff

Susan Stec, Community & Economic Development Director.

Giffels Webster assists the city with planning and zoning services. The GW team assists city staff with technical planning and zoning related calls, emails, and visits to the city. They also prepare reviews, memoranda, and reports for the Planning Commission, ZBA, and City Council, as needed. They attend all Planning Commission meetings as well as City Council meetings as requested. The GW team is directed by Jill Bahm, AICP, partner at GW, and supported by Eric Pietsch, senior planner, as well as our GIS team.

2023 Department Activities

Development Reviews

In 2023, the Planning Commission reviewed five (5) site plan review and one (1) special land use applications; Zoning Board of Appeals considered two applications; and there were three (3) administrative site plan reviews by staff.

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.

Five site plans were reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2023. Two site plans represented applications to amend previously approved site plans, one accompanied a special land use request, one application is for a complete exterior renovation, and the final one represents a change of use and is 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 – BP Gas Station (Modification for screen wall)
- 27701 Southfield Road – The Event House (change of use & special land use)
- 26780 Southfield Road – 44 Burrito (patio)
- 27601 Southfield Road – Oakland Development, LLC (façade renovation)
- 27300 Southfield Road – Abro Management/Skylar Laundromat (pending review, façade renovations & change of use)

Special Land Uses. Special land uses are uses that may be permitted in certain locations within the city, provided that certain standards are met. The Zoning Ordinance provides general standards for special land uses, and some uses have their own additional standards. Generally, most standards are non-discretionary, but there are some discretionary standards that the Planning Commission considers during the review process. A site plan is required with special land use request, with the Planning Commission acting on the site plan and making a recommendation to City Council on the special land use request. There was one special land use request submitted to the city in 2023 – for The Event House on Southfield Road.

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. Throughout 2023, there was one development review item that required public hearing (The Event House). Additionally, three public hearings were held

for the zoning ordinance amendments discussed below, and one for the 2023-2028 Capital Improvements Plan.

Zoning Updates

The Planning Commission worked on several amendments to the Zoning Ordinance this year:

- **Dumpster/Rubbish.** During a development plan review, the Planning Commission identified a conflict between the Zoning Ordinance and General Code of Ordinances. Amendments were drafted to bring the conflicting standards into alignment. A public hearing was held in early 2023.
- **Laundromats.** Staff received an application to establish a laundromat, for which no standards existed in the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Commission was first tasked with determining whether laundromats are a permitted use; it was found to be aligned with the definitions of personal service. The Planning Commission then discussed and established parking standard criteria.
- **Mobile Food Vending.** Staff was receiving regular requests for mobile food vendors to operate in zoning districts other than Village Center. These requests were from established businesses looking to host food trucks as part of a larger events for customers, similar to a caterer, and from food trucks looking to operate in the city. The Planning Commission considered permitting mobile food vending in the Mixed Use (MX) district.
- **Future amendments:** In mid-2023, the Planning Commission identified several areas of the Zoning Ordinance that could benefit from amendments including definitions, permitted uses, and inclusion of solar energy standards. The Planning Commission also began discussing parking regulations. It is expected those discussions will continue through the early half of 2024 with amendments prepared in the second portion of the year.

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) has built upon these conversations and received permission from RCOC to install a HAWK signal near the intersection of Margate Avenue and Southfield Road. The DDA was successfully awarded a State Highway Safety Improvement Program to implement this project. Installation is expected in early 2025; delay is due to material shortages.

- A grant writer has been secured through SEMCOG to draft an application for Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant funding. If successful, this grant will allow the city/DDA and RCOC to implement the first phase of the long-awaited Southfield Road Reconstruction (Meadowood Avenue to Cambridge Boulevard).
- The Community & Economic Development Department continues to work with Main Street Oakland County on redevelopment strategies and organizational support.

Meetings

Body	Number of Meetings
Planning Commission	11
Zoning Board of Appeals	2
Joint City Council, Downtown Development Authority & Planning Commission	0

The Year Ahead

Zoning Amendments. The Comprehensive Plan includes zoning action strategies that recommend specific changes needed to the Zoning Ordinance. Zoning-related work has been initiated with the research on amendments that promote sustainability noted above. The Planning Commission initiated discussion related to reevaluating parking regulations in the commercial districts of the city. The Planning Commission has expressed a desire to work more closely with the DDA to better support new and existing business/property owners seeking to redevelop commercial sites in the city.