



SUBJECT: Initial review of eligibility of Providence Meadows to rezone property south of Grand River and west of Providence Parkway from Light Industrial to High-Density Multiple Family with a Planned Rezoning Overlay.

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT: Community Development Department - Planning

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Rezoning 31 acres on Grand River Avenue to allow a 161-unit development with attached townhomes.
- The former agricultural site was used to dump construction debris in the 1970s-80s, and contains regulated woodlands and an extensive system of wetland areas.
- Proposed PRO Conditions include conservation easements, a public pathway through the property, creation of a trailhead park on the Henry Ford Health property and providing “attainable” housing within the City.
- Planning Commission reviewed the Initial PRO Plan and provided feedback on January 14, 2026.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The applicant, Robertson Brothers Homes, is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment for approximately 31 acres of property on the south side of Grand River Avenue, west of Providence Parkway (Section 17). The applicant is proposing to rezone property from Light Industrial (I-1) to High-Density Multiple Family (RM-2) using the City’s Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO) option.

To the north is the Circuit Court, and immediately adjacent to the north and west are two construction equipment storage yards. On the east side of Providence Parkway is the Henry Ford Health campus. South of the property is the Villas of Stonebrook residential development, and to the west is the undeveloped portion of the Hadley Towing property, containing wetlands and woodlands. There is a 200-foot utility easement running along the entire eastern side of the site with ITC’s high voltage overhead wires.

The current zoning of the property is I-1 Light Industrial, as is the property to the west. The properties to the northwest are zoned I-2 Heavy Industrial. The area to the north of Grand River is B-3 General Business and, and the hospital campus is Office Service Commercial. To the south is zoned I-2, but developed under the Planned Suburban Low-Rise Overlay with duplex homes.

The Future Land Use Map identifies this property and those to the west in gray as Industrial/Office, which is consistent with the current zoning. The area to the north of Grand River as public/quasi-public and community commercial in red. To the east is Office Service Commercial. Suburban low rise is indicated in yellow to the south.

The natural features map shows there are significant wetland areas on this property that continue to the east and west. The property on the west also shows regulated woodlands, which the City's consultant have determined continue onto the subject property. The tree and wetland surveys provided by the applicant confirm these features but provide more detailed boundaries than the City's maps.

The applicant is proposing to utilize the Planned Rezoning Overlay to rezone the whole property to RM-2 High Density Multiple Family. The initial PRO plan shows 161 units of for-sale townhomes. The development consists of two phases: Phase 1, with 88 units in 15 buildings; and Phase 2 with 73 units in 13 buildings. The development utilizes a private street network with one entrance off Providence Parkway, and one emergency-only access to Grand River Avenue. The plans show open space amenities provided in several pocket parks on the site.

Rezoning to the RM-2 category would permit the use proposed, however the multifamily zoning is not in compliance with the current Master Plan designation as Industrial/Office. The previous designation in the 2016 Master Plan was Office Research Development and Technology.

As described in the Wetland Review, each of the delineated wetlands on the site meet the criteria of providing wildlife habitat as well as flood and storm control. Wetland review notes that the proposed development results in a total permanent wetland impact area of about 0.5 acre out of the total 6.79 acres present on site, meaning 93% of the wetlands on site will not be impacted. Approximately 1.25 acres of on-site mitigation area is noted on the plan, which exceeds the City's requirement for mitigation. Staff has suggested that the applicant consider removing the excess mitigation if it would result in additional woodland trees being retained.

For woodlands, additional information will be required to determine the total number of woodland credits required based on the areas that have been determined to be regulated.

As noted in the Façade Review, the façade materials proposed conform to the Ordinance requirements. However, the building designs do not meet the higher standards described in the PRO Ordinance to qualify as an "enhancement" of the project and surrounding area. Additional high-quality materials and architectural features could be added to meet that higher standard.

Landscape review notes concerns with the deficiencies in some of the landscaping standards. Some of the landscaping deviations are supported due to conflicts with the ITC easement and the distance of the units from Grand River Avenue. The unsupported deviations should be addressed in the Formal PRO submittal.

Some other concerns identified include compatibility and buffering from the adjacent uses that will remain zoned for heavy industrial uses. A 10-foot berm and landscaping is proposed in that area, which may help lessen the negative visual, audio, and odor impacts that may be experienced by future residents.

However, being adjacent to a residential development can require additional setbacks or other restrictions, which can be an added burden to surrounding non-residential landowners. In addition, the I-2 uses will become non-conforming uses, because in that district outside storage of any materials and equipment is prohibited when it abuts a residential district. A berm with a minimum height of 10 feet is required between the residential and I-2 district, and all off-street parking, vehicular repair, delivery, loading/unloading and transport are to be no closer than 100 feet from the residential district. The maximum building height for the I-2 properties will be reduced to 25-feet, whereas currently they must not exceed 60 feet. While the current users will not be forced to change their current operations, if they seek to expand their building, or make other changes to their site, or if a new user purchases the property, they could be considered non-conforming and be restricted from expansion or redevelopment.

Residential use would not be inconsistent with the open space to the west and the existing Villas at Stonebrook development to the south. The setback between the proposed units and Grand River Avenue is a significant distance, so it is possible they won't be highly visible from the road.

The natural buffers in place will buffer the residential units from Villas at Stonebrook to the south. The mitigation plan has been revised to leave a minimum 66-foot-wide strip undisturbed adjacent to that community. The closest buildings to Stonebrook would be over 200 feet from the property line. The undisturbed woodland and wetland areas on the site, as well as the 200-foot ITC easement provides a wide buffer from other uses, as well as maintains natural spaces contiguous with adjacent greenspace areas.

The applicant's narrative notes that the target market of the proposed development is the workforce associated with the adjacent medical campus. The buildings are grouped in 2 different clusters, arranged to allow for the preservation of extensive wetland and woodland areas on the site. The applicant is proposing a deviation to allow 50-foot setbacks along the western property line, which adjoins an undeveloped area. This area is not likely to be developed as it contains Hadley Towing's stormwater pond and significant wetland and woodland areas.

A residential development may result in smaller wetland and woodland impacts compared to an Industrial development due to the typical size of buildings and parking needs. I-1 permitted uses include professional and medical offices, health and fitness facilities, and parks or outdoor recreation uses, some of which may have a larger footprint than the RM-2 uses proposed. Other I-1 uses would require Special Land Use approval because it is adjacent to the Stonebrook development on the south.

Compared to a potential medical office/clinic under I-1 zoning, the proposed residential development would have 1,382 fewer trips per day. The Traffic Impact Statement concludes that existing conditions indicate a traffic signal is warranted at the Grand River/Providence Parkway intersection with delays on Providence Parkway exceeding 4 minutes. Because the delay is on the private roadway, the property owner would be responsible for installation of the traffic signal. **The Traffic consultant's review of the TIS recommends coordination with the property owner (Henry Ford Health) to provide the signal installation, however the applicant has not agreed to provide the light.**

The public benefits offered by the applicant include:

1. Public Trail Access Through the Site: A pedestrian pathway to provide public access from Grand River Avenue through the development to Providence Parkway. This

pathway would feature landscape plantings and offer scenic views of the site's natural features.

2. Trailhead Connection and Signage: Development of a new trailhead that links to the larger Henry Ford and ITC trail system.
3. Attainable Housing Option: They state that these for-sale townhomes will offer a more accessible price point for young professionals, first-time buyers, and essential workers, including nurses, doctors, and administrative staff employed at the adjacent Henry Ford Health campus.
4. Preservation of Wetlands and Woodlands: The remaining natural features and mitigation areas will be permanently protected through a conservation easement, ensuring their preservation and ecological value for future residents and the broader community.

In the opinion of staff, given the size of the development proposed, additional or alternative benefits to the public could be considered to off-set the negative impacts of the project. Staff had suggested the applicant consider the recommendations of the Active Mobility Plan for the nearby transit stop on Grand River Avenue, or filling off-site sidewalk gaps on Grand River Avenue to provide a more complete network of pathways in the nearby area.

PRO ORDINANCE

The PRO option creates a “floating district” with a conceptual plan attached to the rezoning of a parcel. As part of the PRO, the underlying zoning is proposed to be changed and the applicant enters into a PRO agreement with the City, whereby the City and the applicant agree to a conceptual plan for development of the site. Following final approval of the PRO concept plan, conditions for the development, and a PRO agreement, the applicant will submit for Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval under standard site plan review procedures. The PRO runs with the land (unless terminated), so future owners, successors, or assignees are bound by the terms of the agreement, absent modification by the City of Novi. If the development has not begun within two (2) years, the rezoning and PRO concept plan expires and the agreement becomes void.

City Council adopted revisions to the Planned Rezoning Overlay ordinance. Under the terms of the new ordinance, the Planning Commission does not make a formal recommendation to City Council after the first public hearing. Instead, the initial review is an opportunity for the members of the Planning Commission, and then City Council, to hear public comment, and to review and comment on whether the project meets the requirements of eligibility for Planned Rezoning Overlay proposal. Section 7.13.2.B.ii states:

In order to be eligible for the proposal and review of a rezoning with PRO, an applicant must propose a rezoning of property to a new zoning district classification, and must, as part of such proposal, propose clearly-identified site-specific conditions relating to the proposed improvements that,

- (1) *are in material respects, more strict or limiting than the regulations that would apply to the land under the proposed new zoning district, including such regulations or conditions as set forth in Subsection C below; and*
- (2) *constitute an overall benefit to the public that outweighs any material detriments or that could not otherwise be accomplished*

without the proposed rezoning.

(See chart at the end of this motion sheet for example conditions from Subsection C)

Ultimately, the applicant will have the burden of demonstrating that the following requirements and standards are met by the PRO Plan, Conditions, and PRO Agreement:

- a. The PRO accomplishes the integration of the proposed land development project with the characteristics of the project area in such a manner that **results in an enhancement of the project area as compared to the existing zoning that would be unlikely to be achieved, or would not be assured, in the absence of the use of a PRO.**
- b. **Sufficient conditions have been included** on and in the PRO Plan and the PRO Agreement such that the City Council concludes, in its discretion, that, **as compared to the existing zoning and considering the site-specific land use proposed by the applicant, it would be in the public interest to grant the rezoning with PRO.** In determining whether approval of a proposed application would be in the public interest, **the benefits which would reasonably be expected to accrue from the proposal shall be balanced against, and be found to clearly outweigh the reasonably foreseeable detriments thereof, taking into consideration reasonably accepted planning, engineering, environmental and other principles, as presented to the City Council,** following recommendation by the Planning Commission, and also taking into consideration the special knowledge and understanding of the City by the City Council and Planning Commission.

In other words, an applicant needs to establish that its proposed project can integrate with the other development in the area, that it results in an enhancement of the project area as compared to the existing zoning, one that couldn't happen without the rezoning and the PRO, and that it would be in the public interest.

After this initial round of comments by the public bodies, the applicant may choose to make any changes, additions or deletions to the proposal based on the feedback received. The applicant will then submit their formalized PRO Plan, which will be reviewed by City staff and consultants. The project would then be scheduled for a 2nd public hearing before Planning Commission. Following the 2nd public hearing the Planning Commission will make a recommendation on the project to City Council. City Council would then consider the rezoning with PRO, and if it determines it may approve it, would direct the City Attorney to work with the applicant on a PRO Agreement. Once completed, that final PRO Agreement would go back to Council for final determination.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on January 14, 2026, to review and make comments on the proposal's eligibility for using the Planned Rezoning Overlay option. Comments made at that time are reflected in the meeting minutes included in this packet, and summarized here:

- Commissioners stated they were concerned about changing the character of this area since it isn't in line with the 2025 Master Plan, which was so recently adopted.
- Commissioners were concerned with the number of deviations from City standards.
- Commissioners thought the layout was thoughtfully designed to take into account the wetland areas and noted that any development of the parcel would have

woodland and wetland impacts.

- Commissioners asked the applicant whether they had considered ranch-style units, given the demand for that style of housing in Novi, or even a portion of the units.
- Commissioners appreciated that the project does not exit onto Grand River.
- Commissioners thought the connection with Henry Ford Hospital could make sense.
- Commissioners reiterated that additional public benefits should be looked at to justify the PRO.
- Commissioners thought the traffic light at Providence Parkway should be considered as shown in the Traffic Study, but recognized that the residential use would have fewer trips than a medical office.
- Some commissioners thought the façade designs were fine as designed, while others thought the applicant could consider doing different color brick or other materials so all buildings are not the exact same.

SUMMARY OF CONDITIONS OFFERED

Below is a summary of possible conditions from applicant, or staff and consultant's review letters that may be considered to meet the standard of *clearly identified site-specific conditions that are more strict or limiting than the regulations that would apply to the land under the proposed new zoning district:*

1. Public Trail Access Through the Site: A pedestrian pathway will be constructed to provide public access from the future sidewalk paralleling Grand River Avenue through the development to Providence Parkway. This pathway will feature landscape plantings and offer scenic views of the site's natural features. Together, the sidewalk and pathway will create a vital connection between the Grand River corridor and the Henry Ford and ITC trail systems. **The proposed pedestrian pathway will be parallel, and in very close proximity, to the existing sidewalk on Providence Parkway. Future homeowners may object to the public being able to walk or bike through their community and attempt to limit public access. The applicant should provide more details for how public access to this pathway would be protected in the long term. Alternatively, since the pathway does not offer a significant enhancement over the one on Providence Parkway, alternative benefits to the public could be considered such as those recommended in the Active Mobility Plan.**
2. Trailhead Connection and Signage: Development of a new trailhead that links to the larger Henry Ford and ITC trail system. **Staff agrees this would be an enhancement that would benefit the greater public. It may require a public access easement be granted by Henry Ford Health and indication of which party will be responsible for the maintenance of the improvements.**
3. Attainable Housing Option: The development will offer 163 for-sale townhomes specifically designed to meet the demand for attainable housing in Novi. These homes will offer a more accessible price point for young professionals, first-time buyers, and essential workers, including nurses, doctors, and administrative staff employed at the adjacent Henry Ford Health campus. **The applicant should provide more details about how attainability will be measured. Will a condition be offered in the PRO Agreement stating the units will not be sold above a certain price point, or**

some similar limitation to achieve “attainability”? If not, what assurance does the City have these would be anything other than fully market rate units, not necessarily fulfilling this representation?

4. Preservation of Wetlands and Woodlands: The site has been carefully planned to minimize impacts on its natural features, including wetlands and woodlands, creating a balanced integration of residential living and nature. These areas will be permanently protected through a conservation easement, ensuring their preservation and ecological value for future residents and the broader community. Further, through meetings with adjacent homeowners, we have revised the plans to provide a 60' minimum natural buffer along the southern property line. **The preservation of natural features and mitigated areas are considered a benefit to the public at large. However, the applicant should be sure to address regulated woodland comments in subsequent submittals.**

DEVIATIONS

The proposed PRO Concept Plan includes the following ordinance deviation requests (Note these are based on the Initial PRO Plan, **with Staff comments in bold**):

1. Building Setbacks (Sec 3.1.7.D): A Zoning Ordinance deviation is requested to reduce the building setbacks from 75 feet to 50 feet along the west property line. **Along the west side, it appears that many of the existing trees will be preserved to provide a buffer from the adjacent property. That portion of the abutting property contains a stormwater management pond, but is otherwise undeveloped.**
2. Total Number of Rooms (Sec. 3.8.1.A): A Zoning Ordinance deviation is requested to allow a greater number of rooms than the RM-2 District permits for buildings less than 4-stories (644 rooms proposed, 536 permitted). **The RM-2 district allows a greater number of rooms for buildings 4 stories or taller, with corresponding higher units. This deviation has been permitted previously, as the overall density permitted by the district is not exceeded.**
3. Building Orientation (Sec. 3.8.2.D): A Zoning Ordinance deviation is requested to revise the required orientation of the buildings from a minimum of 45 degrees in certain locations. This allows for a more uniform site layout, and the buildings parallel to the property lines are not immediately adjacent to other uses. **All buildings are either parallel or perpendicular to property lines abutting non-residential districts. This deviation has been requested and granted for many residential projects in the City in the last 5 years.**
4. Distance between Buildings (Sec 3.8.2.H): A Zoning Ordinance deviation is requested to reduce the building separation distance from the calculated formula as shown on sheet C7 to a minimum of 15 feet. **This deviation enables the layout of this project to fit within the available space while minimizing wetland and woodland impacts.**
5. Parking along Major Drives (Sec. 5.10): A Zoning Ordinance deviation is requested to allow for perpendicular parking on a major drive. **Perpendicular parking for guests is proposed toward the end of Harborfield Drive where traffic speeds should be low. The parking spaces will not cause any more disruption on the roadway than cars that will be backing out of the driveways.**
6. Parking along Curves (Sec. 5.10): A Zoning Ordinance deviation may be required to allow on-street parking on curves with less than a 230-foot centerline radius. **The**

applicant should review the areas where parking is in such curves and consider moving the spaces, or review to ensure a safe and adequate sight distance is provided.

7. **Covered Bike Parking (Sec. 5.16.4):** When 20 or more bike parking spaces are required, 25% of the spaces shall be covered. The applicant requests a deviation. **Applicant response letter indicates bike parking will be provided in unit garages.**
8. **Parking Distance to Buildings (Sec. 3.8.2.F):** In some locations, off-street parking spaces are within 15 feet of the adjacent building. The ordinance requires 25-feet between parking spaces and a dwelling structure that contains openings involving living areas. **These locations generally occur near the sides of buildings. The elevations show there are no windows or openings on these side facades.**
9. **Pedestrian Connectivity (Sec. 3.8.2.G):** Five-foot sidewalks are required on both sides of private drives. It appears that an 8-foot sidewalk is proposed on only one side of Harborfield Drive. Other roadways have sidewalks at the "front" of the buildings. **Please provide the required sidewalks, or provide a justification for the deviation.**
10. **Parking Lot Lighting (Section 5.7.3.J./5.7.3.O):** Parking areas should be lit at a minimum 0.2 fc in residential districts for safety. The applicant requests a deviation from the requirement to provide lighting in the parking areas. **No justification is noted for the deviation. Staff suggests that bollard lighting could provide necessary lighting without being intrusive to residents.**
11. **Right-of-Way Landscaping (Sec. 5.5.3.B.ii):** A deviation for the lack of required 3-foot berm along Grand River Avenue and Providence Parkway due to the existing natural areas to be preserved, and the presence of the ITC easement. **This is supported by staff because the buildings and parking areas will not be close to the frontages.**
12. **Right-of-Way Landscaping (Sec. 5.5.3.B.ii):** A landscape deviation to allow a deficiency in street trees along Grand River Avenue. **This is supported by staff because of the presence of utility conflicts.**
13. **Right-of-Way Landscaping (Sec. 5.5.3.B.ii):** A landscape deviation to allow a deficiency in greenbelt landscaping on Grand River Avenue. **This is supported by staff for the area that falls within the ITC Easement.**
14. **Right-of-Way Landscaping (Sec. 5.5.3.B.iii.):** A landscape deviation to allow a deficiency in street trees along Providence Parkway access easement. **This may be supported by staff. Please add trees where possible and/or explain the need for the deviation if the required trees cannot be provided.**
15. **Right-of-Way Landscaping (Sec. 5.5.3.B.iii.):** A landscape deviation to allow a deficiency in street trees along Harborfield Drive within the ITC easement. **This is supported by staff.**
16. **Right-of-Way Landscaping (Sec. 5.5.3.B.ii):** A deviation for the lack of greenbelt plantings Providence Parkway. **This may be supported by staff. The applicant is asked to clearly identify the existing trees to remain and count toward the required tree count on the plan view and in the calculations, and add trees to remove any remaining deficiencies.**

17. **Multi-Family Landscaping** (Sec. 5.5.3.F.iii): A landscape deviation for the deficiency multi-family unit trees and foundation landscaping. **This deviation is not supported by staff as there are opportunities to more closely comply with the ordinance standards.**

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

This is City Council's opportunity to comment on the eligibility of the proposal according to the standards of the PRO Ordinance and offer feedback to the applicant. No motion is necessary at this time, but the table below contains examples of **conditions** (as listed in the Ordinance) that might assist the Council in reaching a conclusion that, as compared to the existing zoning and considering the site-specific land use proposed by the applicant, it is in the public interest to grant the rezoning with PRO.

Types of PRO Conditions (Section 7.13.2.C.ii.b)	Proposed	Notes
(1) Establishment of development features such as the location, size, height, area, or mass of buildings, structures, or other improvements in a manner that cannot be required under the Ordinance or the City's Code of Ordinances, to be shown in the PRO Plan.	Yes	Buildings and layout to be as shown in the PRO Plan.
(2) Specification of the maximum density or intensity of development and/or use, as shown on the PRO Plan and expressed in terms fashioned for the particular development and/or use (for example, and in no respect by way of limitation, units per acre, maximum usable floor area, hours of operation, and the like).	Yes	Number of units can be stated as maximum allowed. Additional restrictions could include limits on parking, height of buildings.
(3) Provision for setbacks, landscaping, and other buffers in a manner that exceeds what the Ordinance of the Code of Ordinances can require.	Yes	Open space exceeds requirement by 58%. Landscape buffers are proposed along the northwest property line where the property is adjacent to I-2, General Industrial zoning and land uses.
(4) Exceptional site and building design, architecture, and other features beyond the minimum requirements of the Ordinance or the Code of Ordinances.	No	The building materials comply with minimum standards, but design does not qualify as exceptional. The layout of the buildings is such that the attractive front facades and landscaping are only visible from the interior pedestrian walkways. Only the plain building rear faces with no foundation landscaping are visible to automobile traffic or visitors to the site, creating a stark appearance.
(5) Preservation of natural resources and/or features, such as woodlands and wetlands, in a manner that cannot be accomplished through the Ordinance or the Code of Ordinances and that exceeds what is otherwise required. If such areas are to be affected by the proposed development, provisions designed to minimize or mitigate such impact.	Yes	Areas of wetland and woodlands are proposed to be preserved. There are impacts, although the layout attempts to minimize encroachment. Wetland impacts require mitigation, which is proposed in excess of requirements. Additional information needed to determine woodland impacts.
(6) Limitations on the land uses otherwise allowed under the proposed zoning district, including, but not limited to, specification of uses that are permitted and those that are not permitted.	Yes	Use to be limited to multi-family residential

(7) Provision of a public improvement or improvements that would not otherwise be required under the ordinance or Code of Ordinances to further the public health, safety, and welfare, protect existing or planned uses, or alleviate or lessen an existing or potential problem related to public facilities. These can include, but are not limited to, road and infrastructure improvements; relocation of overhead utilities; or other public facilities or improvements.	Yes	8-foot wide shared-use pathway proposed within the site
(8) Improvements or other measures to improve traffic congestion or vehicular movement with regard to existing conditions or conditions anticipated to result from the development.	No	Not proposed.
(9) Improvements to site drainage (storm water) or drainage in the area of the development not otherwise required by the Code of Ordinances.	No	Not proposed.
(10) Limitations on signage.	No	Not proposed.
(11) Creation or preservation of public or private parkland or open space.	Yes	Creation of a small trailhead area within the Henry Ford Health campus
(12) Other representation, limitations, improvements, or provisions approved by the City Council.	TBD	