



A HERITAGE OF GOOD LIVING

2021 PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

January 2022

Prepared with Assistance by:

giffels 
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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 2021 accomplishments.

The Planning Commission in Lathrup Village is comprised of seven members, many of whom have been on the Planning Commission for several years. 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.

2021 was a challenging year for many communities. One of particular challenge was the health-related restriction on gatherings and meetings due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The State of Michigan amended the Open Meetings Act to allow for electronic meeting participation and the City of Lathrup utilized Zoom for its municipal meetings. The Planning Commission held one in-person meeting in January and held eight meetings electronically.

2021 PLANNING COMMISSION ROSTER - AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2021

Name	Term Ending
Mark Piotrowski, (Chairperson)	8/31/22
Jason Hammond (Vice Chairperson)	8/31/24
Robin Dillard-Russaw	8/31/24
Wilbert Fobbs III	8/31/23
Terrence Hicks	8/31/22
Les Stansbery	8/31/22
Bruce Kantor, City Council Liaison	

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF

Susan Stec, Community & Economic Development Director.

Giffels Webster assists the city with planning and zoning services. Our team assists city staff with technical planning and zoning related calls, emails, and visits to the city. We also prepare reviews, memoranda, and reports for the Planning Commission, ZBA, and City Council, as needed. We 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 Matthew Wojciechowski, associate planner, Sri Ravali Komaragiri and Eric Pietsch, senior planners as well as our GIS team.

2021 Department Activities

DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

In 2021, the Planning Commission reviewed 2 development applications. The Zoning Board of Appeals considered one application.

Site Plan Reviews. Site plan review takes place when an application is submitted for new construction or additions 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.

Two site plans were reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2021. One site plan represented an application for “by right” development (permitted uses) and the other accompanied a special land use. Site plan approvals are valid for twelve months, with a one-year extension permitted by the Planning Commission. These site plans included:

- 26079 Southfield Road – US Rehab (change of use)
- 27000 Southfield Road – Discount Tire (Expansion for storage and parking lot reconfiguration)

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. There was one special land use requests submitted to the city in 2021 – for Discount Tire on Southfield Road. A site plan is required with the special land use request, and it is noted above.

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 2021, there was one development review items that required public hearing (Discount Tire). One public hearing was held for the zoning ordinance amendment discussed below.

ZONING UPDATES

The Planning Commission worked on several amendments to the Zoning Ordinance this year, two of which were initiated in 2020:

- **R-1 Parking – Adjacent to MX District.** For many years, the Planning Commission has seen concepts for building expansion and reuse run into problems adequately addressing parking. Since 2015, the Planning Commission has discussed strategies to accommodate parking while also leaving some room for landscaping enhancements, outdoor dining or other amenities that may be desirable. The linear, narrow development pattern of the city’s commercial corridor is bounded by residential neighborhoods on one side and Southfield Road on the other. Any growth or revitalization has to occur within the 100 ft depth of these parcels. In addition to updating parking standards, providing for shared parking and allowing some parking to be provided in side-street rights-of-way, the Planning Commission prepared an amendment to allow parking as a special land use in the R-1 district when adjacent to the MX district and as part of a larger redevelopment project. A public hearing was held in December 2020 and the ordinances adopted in February 2021.

- **Cannabis facilities.** Following a study group recommendation, City Council asked the Planning Commission to prepare zoning standards for cannabis facilities. These amendments were presented for a first draft in November 2020 and were adopted in fall of 2021.
- **Minor Administrative Amendments.** The Planning Commission prepared amendments to clean up confusion related to administrative roles and responsibilities, fences and materials needed for site plan review. These amendments were made to chapters 5-7 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- **Future amendments:** Towards the end of 2021, the Planning Commission has been exploring ways to promote alternative energy uses in the Zoning Ordinance, including accommodations for both electric vehicle charging and solar energy. Amendments will likely be prepared in early 2022. Additional amendments planned for 2022 include updates to the City’s landscaping standards and front yard parking for residential homes.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Comprehensive Plan.** In 2019, the city’s Master Plan was ready for its five-year review, which is required by state law. This review was initiated by the Planning Commission in 2019 and the Planning Commission found that an update was needed. Since the Recreation Plan and Downtown Plan also need to be updated, the city launched a process to update all three plans as a Comprehensive Plan. This allows the city to see how each of these plans relate to each other as well as encourage all boards and commissions responsible for implementation to see how their efforts are connected. The pandemic, development review and pressing zoning concerns has slowed the long-range planning process; however, the plan was adopted in July 2021.
- Building Materials Study Group was formed to study the existing standards and whether it is advisable to add newer, more modern materials.
- The Community & Economic Development Department continues to have discussions about long-range improvements to Southfield Road with the Road Commission for Oakland County.
- The Community & Economic Development Department continues to work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to ensure that the city retains its Redevelopment Ready certification.
- 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	9
Zoning Board of Appeals	3
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. This work will continue in 2022.