

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

Monday, April 10, 2023  
2009 Township Drive  
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

**A. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Parel called the meeting to order at 5:32pm.

**ROLL CALL:** Present: Brian Parel, Chairperson  
Brian Winkler, Vice Chairperson  
Joe Loskill, Secretary  
George Weber  
Brady Phillips  
Sam Karim (arrived at 5:44pm)  
Absent: Bill McKeever (excused)  
Also Present: Paula Lankford, Planner  
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 Phillips, to approve the Planning Commission Regular Meeting Agenda of April 10, 2023, as presented.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**C. MASTER LAND USE PLAN REVIEW**

Work session of the 2015 Master Land Use Plan update: North End Area Plan Discussion

Jill Bahm – To preface our discussion, Julia and I are back from last week’s American Planning Association Conference which was really interesting. It was in Philadelphia, and each of us went to all different sessions except for one, so we each brought a little something different back. I think you’ll see some of that tonight. As we were framing conversations, we were thinking about those things.

Tonight, we are talking about the north end. In your packet, you received the map and things we hope you had a chance to look at. Our idea tonight is like we did last time, to go through some background materials and talk about these sites, but within the context of the fact that they are all related. There is a map on the table that identifies all the sites we are looking at.

I went to a session on Community Asset Mapping, and it was really more about arts and cultural assets, but it really made me think of this map and some of the things that we have highlighted here. They may not technically be arts or cultural assets, or maybe not now, but I think they have elements of that. Thinking about those things within the context of this whole area really colors it in. You might see these as individual sites, but now we’ve got a little bit more color as we’ve talked about the parks. We’ve mentioned all of these things, but really thinking of it as a very unique area. We have water access. One of the things we added to a slide was boating access on Union Lake, and Long Lake, even though that access itself is technically in White Lake. Certainly we have those two public access points here, plus the parks, historic sites, the Village with its history, the Library, and the hospital.

We've also talked about nonmotorized transportation so we have a big map on that. And then Julia and Rose are going to go through some short slides. We will try to skip over most of it so that we can just talk. What we really want to accomplish tonight is to think about the Future Land Use Map for the current plan and the future. Are we going to think of it as business as usual in terms of what we've said we wanted in this area? That is predominantly housing. Or, are we going to change some things up a little bit? You will probably see some things tonight that will make you say, "No, we don't want that." We're just throwing those things out there to determine what your furthest boundary is for some of our housing discussions, so then you can walk us back.

Rose Kim – To reiterate, our goal tonight is to have discussion about land use, look at what we have and how that is going to inform the direction for the Commission with that area plan. These are some of the factors that we're going to go over. This is essentially the same map we have on the table there, showing the facilities, and we've also pointed out a couple of other landmarks like the boat access that are important to the area.

Phillips – Is Commerce Village its own entity? Is that our jurisdiction and are we deciding what happens in Commerce Village?

Rose Kim and Jill Bahm replied yes.

Phillips – So it's not like Wolverine Lake or Walled Lake?

Weber – That's a great question. It's not a legal village. It's just what we call it.

Jill Bahm – Think of it maybe as a hamlet, but it's not incorporated.

Rose Kim – One of the things as a touchpoint in our discussion today is that design can have a greater impact on neighborhood character than density does. We're going to take a look at how design of some of the opportunity sites may impact things like nonmotorized connections, and the character of the area.

Julia Upfal – These are a few different examples of single-family homes where the design may have an effect on the surrounding neighborhood character. While most conventional zoning would allow these houses to be constructed, with odd-shaped windows, modern materials, and really large garages, those are things that might not be cohesive with neighborhood character, even though they're allowed.

Weber – Architects.

Loskill – It's usually not the architects, it's usually the builders and developers who try to squeeze every last house in. I'm an architect, I see it. The developer says I have 18 acres and I'm allowed 12 units per acre; I've got to have that number. That's the starting point for these guys. If we want to keep character, density can have a very big impact on the feel of a community. When developers go in and strip out all the natural elements to put in these homes, you lose a lot of character and nature because of the density.

Jill Bahm – Right, but if you go back a slide; these houses are garage forward, which says the neighborhood is a place for cars, not people. We can't see what's happening

on the street or next door from the front step. On the next slide, these designs let you sit out on the front porch or have you more engaged with what's happening on the street and that's safer, and fosters more of that neighborhood activity that, generally speaking, I think people like.

Loskill – The top three pictures are all houses with nice lots around them. That's the example you're using, whereas all the others on the previous slide are all jammed right next to each other.

Jill Bahm – I think that's one of the things. The duplex, that is a house that could be a single-family house. It could be at the end of the street, where all the houses are about the same size on lots of the same size, but maybe one is a duplex or a triplex. The houses look the same, but we're squeezing in a few more units of housing that might offer a different type of living for people in the community.

Julia Upfal – The reason why I wanted to include that single-family and duplex image is because the single-family house would be permitted most places in Commerce Township, but the duplex wouldn't. When you have houses like the last slide that have no problem being constructed, but you don't have something that's a high-quality design just because it might accommodate a second person, that's something to consider.

Rose Kim – At this point, we're going to be talking about housing needs in particular and how that might affect the opportunity sites.

Julia Upfal – On this slide, we're talking about what is the missing middle from a demographic perspective. The portion of the population that is below that 80% area median income, there are federal subsidies to construct housing and a developer can turn a profit. When you're constructing for that market that is over 120%, it's market rate and a developer can turn a profit. But, when you have that 80% to 120% area median income, it's very difficult for a developer to be successful. I looked at the Zillow data to see what's on the market right now here in Commerce Township. I based the ranges for the missing middle and the market rate on 3 times the rate of annual income, which is kind of the standard for how much a mortgage should be. If you see, on the missing middle, there were only 7 of the 67 results, and none of them were new construction, whereas the market rate, it was 58 of 67 of the results, and 62% of the listings were new construction.

Weber – Just so I'm clear, in all of Commerce Township right now, there's 67 homes for sale?

Julia Upfal – On Zillow.

Weber – Okay, but that's close enough. In the item there that speaks to the missing middle and 0% of them are new construction, I don't know if we discussed it before. We own a piece of land, 10 acres north of 14 Mile, east of Decker Road. It has some challenges in terms of access, but I think Dave talked to some developers to say, "Look, if we give you the land, can you build the middle? Can you build smaller square footages? We will give you higher density to build a starter neighborhood." Nobody

wanted anything to do with it. We said they would have to be priced under \$275,000 for the house. Nobody – even if we gave them the land – nobody would touch it.

Julia Upfal – That's kind of what we're trying to demonstrate is that it's very challenging to get this kind of housing constructed, but it plays a key role in the community. I think that's what the next slide gets at, where we're talking about who is in the missing middle.

- Young professionals who might be locating elsewhere
- Young families and first-time home buyers who are looking to build roots and purchase their first home
- Retirees and empty nesters looking to downsize and stay in Commerce Township
- Expanding opportunities for families with more intensive housing needs
- Workers who would otherwise commute long distances exacerbating congestion challenges

Weber – So Rock Ridge is a new development, exactly targeting the newer family on Pontiac Trail. When they started, I think it was \$300,000 to \$325,000?

Paula Lankford – Yes.

Weber – And these were going to be really cool small square foot homes, but very environmentally friendly and have a community garden. Just a great little development. Where's he at now?

Paula Lankford – Between \$400,000 and \$500,000.

Weber – That's where he started, I thought it was \$295,000 to \$325,000.

Paula Lankford – When he first came and talked to us, it was more high \$200's.

Weber – And now it's \$400,000 to \$500,000 within three years.

Paula Lankford – It happened right away actually.

Chairperson Parel – When did Dave have that conversation with the developers? That must have been at least a year ago, right?

Weber – That would have been within the past two years.

Chairperson Parel – So two years ago, the market was significantly different too. It's even worse now.

Karim – Yes, and it's going to be worse. I don't think it's our job to regulate the size of the house. The market will regulate that, no matter what we do. It's the markets and the developers. For us to make the land accessible, we have to find a way to make it easier for the developer to build. My bachelor's degree is in architecture, and my master's is in planning, although it has been 40 years. When I do planning, the first thing I do is take

the area and see how you can reach the roads and the routes; where people can go and how they go to what area. From there, we decide what we're going to do with every piece of land. As you're saying, one of them will be expensive housing, and the other is affordable houses and some would be subsidized housing.

Before we even decide what we're going to do, we have to know the access to those. Commerce Township has a lot of empty lands everywhere, but to go to those lands – I mean I just came through Martin Road and I can see the line of cars. I think before we talk about the type of houses, before we talk about which area will have each type of housing, we have to talk about the routes, the roads and how we can exit those areas, and what's in the future for those roads. Then, after that, we decide what we will do with those lands.

Phillips – What is the goal? Do we have a goal to get higher population in Commerce Township? Or, are we trying to manage the growth so that it's the right kind of growth?

Weber – That's the term we've used, managing the growth.

Karim – You can't do anything about it. Growth is coming. I left Farmington Hills because it was getting crowded. There's no land to build except for a few that were not very desirable. West Bloomfield is the same thing; you can hardly find a piece of land. People are turning to Commerce Township just like I did. I have a lot of friends who are looking here and they've said the roads are too crowded.

My grandkids live across the street from me. To take them to school, which is like two miles, it took me half an hour to get there and get back. The roads are two lanes and there's a school bus in front of you and you're stuck.

Jill Bahm – Right, I remember 24 years ago, when we moved out here, talking to the planner in West Bloomfield. He said, "Just as long as you know, there are two lane roads out there and that's all there's ever going to be. It's going to be traffic forever."

Karim – That's what we should concentrate on before we decide what we're going to do with most of that land. Maybe we can decide right now easily to say what each area will be, but we have to think about the roads and how they're going to get to those areas.

Jill Bahm – And we have to think about the resources of the Township or the County Road Commission to do expansion of roads and whether that's even something that we need to be planning for.

Karim – At least we do the planning.

Weber – But, to be clear, as hard as a lot of us have pushed to try to fix the stretch from Martin Parkway up to Williams Lake Road exchange, it is not going to happen, not within decades.

Karim – Let's plan for the decades then.

Jill Bahm – Yes. So, how do we accommodate population change, people coming to this area that want to live here? How do we manage the growth? Also, be thinking about a bigger picture too. Not that Commerce Township needs to solve the housing problems

of this whole region, but certainly, are there opportunities that Commerce Township can play a part in to make this area more sustainable for more people regionally? That's good for everybody.

I had an interesting conversation with a man at the conference. He was from a city in Florida. It's an older community and established in the suburbs. They were growing, but not rapidly. It reminded me of you all here. He has been trying to talk to his community, his constituents, and he said, "We have to change a little to stay the same." We were talking about how people don't like change and it's very difficult. He said, "No, we do have to change, but we have to change so that we can stay the same." I thought that was an interesting way of thinking about things.

We've articulated those things earlier in our process; the things that we want to make sure are staying the same, such as preservation of natural features, environmental quality, trees, single-family neighborhoods. How do we do things so we can keep that, and yet be accommodating to the change that we know is probably coming? People still want to come out here, and we can't say no, nobody else can come out.

Loskill – We could look at allowable density in these developments. In some of these larger tracts, not letting them put in all the top houses. Make them put in some mixed-use housing developments. Maybe we trade off then, increased density for a more diverse housing mix. I don't see any other way to get that to happen, short of working those angles and making the developers come in with quality products, not just maxing out density and shoving in as many homes as they can. I don't know if that really always relates to a quality development. We have a nice area and people are going to want to be out here. We have to decide if we're going to let everybody build to the maximum density, or if we are going to concentrate on first-class developments in order to manage the growth.

Jill Bahm – Right, and I think trying to be strategic, which was Rose's word of the day, on where we are thinking about adding that.

Julia Upfal – These are really great conversations to lead into the next slide.

Weber – How many slides do we have to go through?

Julia Upfal – We have 20 more.

Weber – I don't want to get off topic.

Jill Bahm – We're going to keep going.

Julia Upfal – We've had a lot of conversations about the impact of housing and congestion, and the ties that they have together. I think while internally that is an important consideration, we also need to consider the effect of the fact that most people who live in Commerce Township commute outside of Commerce Township for work, and most people who work in Commerce Township are commuting from outside of the Township to get here. That is also contributing to a lot of the congestion. We have data here on the inflow and outflow and you can see that you have 11,000 people coming in, and 18,000 people going out. There are only 1,333 people who live and work here in the Township.

Chairperson Parel – What about the people that drive through Commerce Township?

Julia Upfal – They're not in these figures.

Discussion took place regarding the freeway that ends in our community, the source of the 2016 data from On The Map which is a mix of census, LEHD and BLS data, and how they use information to look at employment and population centers. Weber noted that of the 40,000 residents, less than 20,000 are working. Julia Upfal found that interesting and added that the figures were pretty consistent with SEMCOG, which said about 54% were 16 and younger, not part of the work force or unemployed. Parel added that it's possible there are 10,000 people working from home in Commerce. Discussion continued regarding the 2016 outdated data.

Jill Bahm – You're right about people going through the community. You could say, we don't want to have anything else happen here, but you're still going to get more traffic because of everything that is happening around you. You're not an island.

Weber – The moral to your story is that it's more of a symphony, and you're trying to pull different pieces to make one concert, where we have to understand that our road systems are not going to dramatically change within the life of this Master Plan. Therefore, we recognize the issues we have of accessibility and traffic, and as we're looking at these pieces of land, and others, but specifically these, it's the density that we allow that will have a direct relationship on the impact of our road systems

Jill Bahm – I would say it will have impact, but there are other things that we talk about, like having more jobs in the Township. We talked about that when we discussed the commercial center area; other alternatives for people to not get in their car. So, being able to walk to get their goods and services, and we will talk about that on the west end here, and nonmotorized transportation facilities. This is a community with so many natural resources, and to be able to really embrace that and be outside and have the facilities that you can safely get around, not in a car, and not take that trip that's a mile away, can really go a long way to getting people off the road.

Julia Upfal – I also think, *Where else would that housing go if not here?*, is an important question. If it is going to go even further out, and all of those people are going to come here for work and still drive on the roads, then you're missing out on the tax capture and the benefit of having those people here in the community, and they're still adding to your congestion.

Jill Bahm – That's a factor that we can't control.

Chairperson Parel – I don't think a lot of our commercial development ...

Weber – It's not going to be thousands of jobs. If you took Williams and what's exiting with them, and maybe what gets replaced, I would assume it would be something that is not wildly different.

Jill Bahm – No. And then to your point about working from home and hybrid work too, where people aren't necessarily on the road 5 days a week, but they might be on the

road 2 or 3 days a week, we may have some staggered rush hour times or days. I think Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are the days, and I think Wednesday is the day that everybody is on the road. But then, being proximate to those job centers; the idea that “you can work anywhere” is not necessarily for everybody. You still need to be near your main place of employment so that you have access.

Loskill – That may be changing. I read an article in the *Wall Street Journal* from this last weekend. Companies are bringing people back in, and they’re reducing the work from home. So, that may not be as big of a part of this in 5 years as it was through the pandemic. It’s nice to know we have the ability to do that, but it may not come back. That may be a temporary blip in the data.

Julia Upfal – That is a good leeway into economic development. I think we’re going to start by talking about the hospital, its economic impact and the potential for spillover. I thought this was really interesting data. It was from the Michigan Hospital Association, and it shows direct jobs, induced jobs and total jobs in Michigan and Oakland County. Induced jobs are the multiplier effect, so those are jobs that are created because of the jobs related to the hospital. Wages and salaries and induced wages and salaries are the same things. The induced wages and salaries have that multiplier, and that’s the additional money that’s coming into the community. Unfortunately, they didn’t have this data at the Township level, but I thought it was interesting in showing how strong of an effect the hospitals have on the broader economy.

Weber – I don’t understand the two columns. What does the Oakland County column represent? Is that 96,000 jobs of people working in hospitals in Oakland County?

Julia Upfal – Yes.

Weber – Is there an average per hospital?

Julia Upfal – They didn’t provide that in the data set.

Chairperson Parel – It’s interesting to think about what our hospital may be missing as far as some type of ancillary commercial development, or some type of housing to support the hospital. I don’t know of much, if anything, that we really have to support our hospital here, or if it’s needed.

Weber – What do you mean?

Chairperson Parel – What about a commercial center where people can walk and have a sandwich, or a coffee shop, or a park?

Weber – That’s the Village.

Chairperson Parel – But they can’t walk there.

Weber – Not yet.

Jill Bahm – That’s part of what ...



Phillips – Some hospitals have adjacent housing for people that are visiting.

Chairperson Parel – Or for doctors and nurses.

Loskill – Just workers.

Jill Bahm – Right, if traffic is such that hospital staff is just exhausted and they don't want to spend 45 minutes to an hour in their car each way, and there was something that was close by where they could just walk, or ride a bike, does that help attract?

Loskill – I'm not worried about the doctors. We have a number of doctors and nurses living in my neighborhood, which is the Hills of Bogie Lake, which is a stone's throw from the hospital. It's the housekeepers and the support staff that I think we should be more concerned with. Doctors are going to find houses, there are plenty of them. As we saw in the data you've supplied, there are lots of high-end houses in Commerce Township right now. It's that middle and lower income that I think we need to be cognizant of.

Weber – I wonder what data Huron Valley has. I wonder if there is an opportunity for a survey or some kind of data gathering from hospital staff.

Chairperson Parel – They would definitely have their number of employees and number of folks using their services.

Weber – And they have all of their addresses. So, even if we didn't get the information, it's just how many employees have a 48390 zip code, or a 48382?

Chairperson Parel – Should we give Dave some homework?

Paula Lankford – Because he's not here.

Jill Bahm – That's a great idea.

Weber – It's kind of a penalty.

Julia Upfal – I spent quite a bit of time trying to locate that data set that has the number of employees at the hospital. I did want to be able to apply that multiplier impact to show you.

Jill Bahm – I thought we had that somewhere. I'll keep looking.

Chairperson Parel – I'll give you an example, and I know it's the Village. I see a lot of people coming to the bagel shop in the Village. Nurses and doctors are always there with their scrubs on. That's an ancillary support retail business that supports the hospital.

Julia Upfal – Yes, I think there are definitely unmet demands there. It was hard to show the number of establishments here compared to other places with a hospital campus. It's not a small hospital. I only have the data for Huron Valley Sinai, where there are 153

beds, and Henry Ford has 191. Henry Ford ranks #18 in Michigan for total net patient revenue. It was a list of the Top 25.

Chairperson Parel – There's 7,000 patients at Huron Valley per year?

Julia Upfal – That's the number of total discharges, so yes, the number of people who come in and out.

Phillips – More people go in than come out.

Julia Upfal – Gross revenue is not the best metric because it includes equipment and supplies, but they didn't have the net revenue available for hospital data. They had the net revenue for Henry Ford because they had the list of the Top 25 hospitals by net revenue.

Jill Bahm – Patient revenue, \$904,724,970.00.

Weber – A billion dollars; so that's an average of \$150,000 per patient.

Jill Bahm – However, their net income is \$24 million. There's a lot of expenses.

Discussion continued regarding figures for total billings and revenue at Huron Valley Sinai, and when the hospital was constructed, which was in the late 1980's.

Phillips – That's a real asset to the community, knowing that you have a quality hospital nearby.

Chairperson Parel – But are we supporting it?

Julia Upfal – While we didn't have the hospital employee numbers, I did look at the number of residents in Commerce Township that are employed in healthcare services. If you apply that same multiplier factor for the County, it should result in 1,410 spillover jobs here in the Township, but are those jobs actually happening here? I think we've had this discussion, but those were some of the questions to consider. I think you guys did a great job of fleshing that out already.

Weber – The bottom line is, having a hospital on the Beaumont property would be awesome because it's going to produce a billion dollars and 2,500 jobs.

Julia Upfal – I don't know that those are all hospital. Those are healthcare services, so that's dentist offices, medical offices, and doctor's offices.

Jill Bahm – I'm starting to doubt this data, but we will figure out the real data.

Julia Upfal – You're looking at the American Hospital Directory?

Jill Bahm – I did.

Julia Upfal – Then I have the Michigan Health and Hospital Association Economic Impact Report.

Jill Bahm – We'll figure it out.

Julia Upfal – In the 2015 Master Plan, there were some goals spelled out for the Village area. I wanted to run through those goals.

- **Housing:**
  - Protect residential neighborhood character
  - Attached single-family may be allowed in commercial areas with appropriate design
- **Village Character:**
  - Historic preservation
  - Reference Site and Architectural Design Manual
  - Commerce Village and Mill Site Development Plan
  - Establish historic district, protect historic structures
  - Brownfields/ remediation
  - Surrounding land uses provide a transition into the Village
- **Nonresidential Uses:**
  - Inappropriate to create a 20<sup>th</sup> century “Main Street” commercial area
  - Provide flexibility in zoning or create overlay district
  - Limit commercial uses at intersection of Carroll Lake and Commerce, and Commerce between Carroll Lake and just West of Ponderosa
  - Complete a retail market study
  - Appropriate location for medical office if designed properly
- **Public Facilities, Infrastructure & Amenities**
  - Township-owned property should be developed as low-intensity public uses
  - Non-motorized pathways to connect public facilities, parks, shopping areas, residential neighborhood

Weber – What does the bullet point mean, *Inappropriate to create a 20<sup>th</sup> century “Main Street” commercial area?*

Jill Bahm – We were going to ask you the same question.

Chairperson Parel – I don't know if inappropriate is the word.

Loskill – It's not desirable.

Chairperson Parel – I think what they're describing is Milford.

Weber – It's unrealistic.

Jill Bahm – My thought is that it was the shoulder-to-shoulder buildings. It's an area where now there is a little bit more space between the buildings. That's more reflective of a hamlet.

Chairperson Parel – It's just unrealistic to expect that we're going to have a Village like Milford has a downtown.

Phillips – That was the intent of Five & Main, to create that type of environment.

Jill Bahm – Probably even more than that.

Phillips – I feel that the Commerce Village should just be a village and very quaint.

Weber initiated discussion regarding the Rabban's, who own Annie's party store and other important properties in the Village. They presented a concept or a vision for the Village. Paula Lankford added that the Rabban's met with her and Dave Campbell a few months ago. They do have a lot of really good ideas and it's just a matter of seeing it to fruition, and much of what they envision might not be on their dime, such as sidewalks and streetscape. Jill Bahm discussed planning for that so it can be realized. Weber discussed on-street parking in front of the buildings, and connecting the sidewalks to Mill Race Park and other sites. Discussion continued of potential mixed-uses, with retail on the first floor, and offices or residential above, along with addressing accessibility. Paula noted that the former Bottle Shoppe was sold and it will be an urgent care for animals. Weber noted that the Rabban's want to be a catalyst in developing the Village into something better. Chairperson Parel added that the Township has to participate, not only in this, but in making improvements to the infrastructure. Weber felt that the Planning Commission should set the vision. Jill Bahm pointed out that there is an overlay district in the Village, however it is optional. The overlay could be changed, and the ordinance itself could be refined to accurately direct growth.

Jill Bahm – This is basically your architectural design manual, so it's really more appropriate for a community like Milford, where you have an established building form. In the Village, we don't have an established building form. It's kind of whatever. Probably the most important features would be the buildings up to the sidewalk, parking on the side or in the back, ample windows at the ground level, and then deciding how tall you're willing to go with building height, either all up to the street, or something could be setback, and then the kinds of things that you would allow there. And then, what do you want to see from the public realm? Can we use these buildings to create public spaces, like sidewalks and roads, and can we do on-street parking?

Weber – I think we should endeavor to solve that and to have the vision. To me, it's some of those renderings that the Rabban family shared with us. That would be a fantastic start. Those were two stories, with retail on the bottom, and office or something else above, with the windows and set far enough back that you would actually have off-road diagonal parking. We had talked about seeing if we could give up some of the land we had in front of Mill Race to add some parking spots there, just a few, with a sidewalk as well to help spur this.

Jill Bahm – We actually asked you guys that earlier. That is something that we were going to inquire more about, whether that is a possibility. There may be some environmental concerns there.

Paula Lankford – Dave has Emily looking into that.

Jill Bahm – That’s good. If you have a property owner who is already interested in doing that, you’re a little bit farther ahead. We just need to catch up with everything else, the things that the Township can control there.

Chairperson Parel – I think you’re right. We could set the goal, which is what we need to do as part of the Master Plan, but we still have to take the next step with them and Dave, and see how we might execute a few projects that they brought to us. I agree, that’s exactly what we want to do.

Vice Chairperson Winkler – It’s important to mention that we already have an overlay district, and whatever we want to see happen can be incorporated with that overlay.

Chairperson Parel – Would almost everything that gets developed there require Special Land Use?

Jill Bahm – No.

Paula Lankford – No, and the overlay is an option.

Jill Bahm – Right, but you could rewrite it, you could create a new zoning district. You say this is the Village Center District and this is the way we want buildings to be situated on the lots, here’s the uses, ...

Chairperson Parel – But it’s so unique, I don’t know if you could do that. I feel like each parcel could be really unique, or at least a majority of them. We could set some guidelines.

Phillips – There’s nothing on that screen that works for that area.

Jill Bahm – No. I think what’s missing here are the ones with spaces in between.

Weber – Something that is quaint.

Jill Bahm – What does quaint look like?

Weber – Not that.

Loskill – That is what I see Five & Main being.

Open discussions continued regarding the vision for the Village, the existing homes and buildings in the area, diagonal parking in front of buildings, and being careful that future development is not a mish-mash.

Jill Bahm – As to the comment to be careful it’s not a mish-mash, sometimes change is messy. We don’t want to put someone out by making their building nonconforming so that they can’t make improvements that they need to do.

Chairperson Parel – I'd like new design to be consistent. When you have an old colonial house that has been turned into a dentist office, there can't be a modern retail that's two or three stories on the other side of the street.

Jill Bahm – But we might not want everything to look like a Victorian home.

Chairperson Parel – I agree. To George's point, maybe there is something in the middle and we need to control that, but at the same time promote development there.

Jill Bahm – Things that look like they were built this century, but are complementary to the things that were built previously.

Loskill – You want it to look like it developed naturally.

Jill Bahm – Right, you want to be able to see the history and the story.

Chairperson Parel – I do recall that we did make some changes to zoning in this district a few years ago. On the north side of the street where it says B-2 in pink, there were a couple parcels there that were originally set up to have parking in the rear, like Milford, and those folks were having trouble getting financing. We changed it back to residential to help them out, because we determined it was inappropriate to create a 20<sup>th</sup> century main street with parking in the rear.

Paula Lankford – What happened with that is it used to be B-2 on the street, P for parking in the back, and then we changed our ordinance in 2010 and there was no more P-parking zoning. So, we had to change the P to something, so it went to B-2. Then, unfortunately people who had houses within that had trouble.

Jill Bahm – That might be something we put a pin in for now and the next time you look at your Master Plan, you might want to look at how things are changing and how new building is taking place there, and how parking is being addressed. Or, just being mindful that we're not going to require parking; we're just going to let things happen.

Chairperson Parel – I'm not sure I like that.

Weber – No, I don't like that either.

Jill Bahm – Right, I mean where will it go? It would go into the neighborhoods. It depends on how comfortable people felt with that.

Weber – There you go, the one in the middle.

Julia Upfal – The last slide was just commercial, and this is mixed use. This one was from Highland that you pointed out where it almost looks like four houses. The first story is store fronts and the second story is residential, but it really meets the neighborhood character. I think that first floor uses are really dynamic and definitely interact with the sidewalk, but it's a little unexpected and it's very charming. This development was overseen by the DDA Director for Highland.

Discussion continued regarding when this hamlet building was first constructed in Highland, and an adjacent, unattractive suburban office building. Jill Bahm noted that when the hamlet was first built, it was an equestrian supply shop. It was an active retail storefront, but it's not there anymore. Karim felt that was because of the building and how it did not reflect the use of it. Jill added that the building now has medical uses and an orthodontist.

Julia Upfal – Now we're going to talk about density. This first slide is to set the tone. How much is an acre? What does that look like? A football field is relatively close to an acre; it's 48,000 square feet so it's a little bit larger than an acre. For zoning districts here in Commerce Township, lot minimums are:

- R-1A: 20,000 SF (Approx. 2 houses/ acre)
- R-1B: 12,000 SF ( Approx. 3.5 houses/ acre)
- R-1C: 10,000 SF (Approx. 4.5 houses/ acre)
- R-1D: 7,200 SF (Approx. 6 houses/acre)

That is dividing out an acre equally, so this is not considering common areas or streets. It's also based on the lot minimums, and of course there could be lots larger than that. Also, what does 1,000 square feet look like when we're thinking about building size? I love this visual of 5 parking spaces because whenever I try to think about how large a house is, I just break it up into parking spaces in my head and I can really conceptualize what that is. Going into each zoning district, neighborhoods that are pretty reflective of that lot minimum, so you can get a good idea of what that looks like.

These are mostly in Commerce Township, but I think one slide is from Walled Lake or Wixom. Here we have Forest Edge Drive and they're 20,000 to 23,000 square foot lots. That's the visual from the aerial and the front of the street. Here we have 11,000 to 13,000 square foot lots on Turtlewood Court and the R-1B lot minimum is 12,000 square feet, so those are similar to that. R-1C is a 10,000 square foot lot minimum, so these are 10,000 to 11,000 square foot lots on Buffalo Drive.

And then R1-D is 7,200 square foot lot minimum and there are very few places in the Township where there are lots that small. I would say even though they are permitted to be that small, unless they're cottage lots along lakefronts which are quite a bit smaller and probably developed way before the Zoning Ordinance, most lots are greater than 7,200 by quite a bit. The aerial shows what that would look like and here you can see what the lot is visually.

A common thread through all of this is that the level of density doesn't necessarily affect the character of the house; it's how it's designed and positioned on the lot. It certainly has an impact on the neighborhood, but there isn't a substantial difference between the 20,000 and 7,200 square foot lots in terms of the house that goes on them.

Here in the north end, we're looking at the opportunity sites. I looked at, based on 50% of the site, assuming 20% of the site is being used for common areas and roads, and 30% for preservation, how many houses would fit on the site based on the lot minimums? This is for each of the opportunity sites, and you can see based on each of the zoning district lot minimums, increased density is a possibility. While Long Farm at the most dense zoning district would include 756 houses, I think it's really important to keep in mind that's 250 acres. It's really just 3 houses per acre once you take off that 50% for preservation and common areas. The drive-in site and the others all pretty much average out to 3 houses per acre when you break it down.

Weber – But of those, the drive-in is not zoned residential.

Julia Upfal – No, this is just if developed as residential. It's all hypothetical.

Weber – All the rest are zoned residential. Commerce and Carey is R-1A. Long Farm is R-1A. Walled Lake (Schools property), the 83 acres adjacent Victory, is R-1B. Union Lake Golf Course, I think that might be R-1C. Bay Pointe we can probably talk about because it's public knowledge now according to Dave, and it's under contract with the Chaldean Church.

Paula Lankford – Yes, I believe so.

Weber – I think that's a positive. I don't know about the Walled Lake Schools property adjacent to Commerce Elementary.

Paula Lankford – That's R-1C also.

Weber – Okay, and that's the one right on Wise Road. Of those, we have two R-1A's, one R-1B, and two R-1C's.

Julia Upfal – And in follow-up, we can tell you what those would be based on the existing zoning.

Chairperson Parel – Maybe we bold that number.

Weber – The property to the south of Victory Park, we're not pleased that the school district wants to sell that and jam 150 homes on there. It's a beautiful wooded area. We did try to discuss with them, would they sell it to us, and at the time they said no. They want 150 homes on there so that they can get the tax base for that. But, do we discuss that property being R-1A as a future land use, as it is adjacent to a park?

Chairperson Parel – In the future, how does that affect them selling and a developer coming in?

Paula Lankford – They wouldn't get as many houses.

Chairperson Parel – Can we dictate that?

Paula Lankford – I have a zoning map in front of me. You don't want to master plan it to something that could create spot zoning.

Discussions continued regarding zoning adjacent to park land, surrounding zoning districts and uses around Victory Park and the Walled Lake Schools property, and the map of these areas was thoroughly reviewed as to density and developments. Jill encouraged connections between the uses and the parks, and pondered how residential should look if it were to be developed. Potential development and growth management was considered, along with traffic congestion. Karim lives in the area and as a planner, he discussed road connections to improve accessibility. Jill noted that a lot



of the roads stop, curve and turn because of the natural features. She encouraged making nonmotorized connections in the area to allow kids to walk to school.

Chairperson Parel – These could be two separate things. One is how we're going to manage development of adjacent land uses, and one is how we connect existing.

Jill Bahm – But they're related. If we say we don't want housing here because the traffic is already bad enough, then we flip it. How do we get people where they need to go without having to jump in their cars?

Chairperson Parel – I would say they're connected, but they could be addressed separately as well.

Jill Bahm – My only point is, we don't say we have too much traffic so we should leave this a park.

Weber – It's not a park, but I think the concept the Board was discussing on that is, it's a beautiful wooded area that's getting used like a park. And, how do we maintain that, especially since it's adjacent to the park to the north?

Jill Bahm – Right, that's great connectivity. To be able to be in a park, and to be able to walk all the way through all of this is amazing.

Karim – Yes, but shall we stop developing houses because the roads are crowded? Or, shall we solve the roads so we can have enough development? People are going to come in here no matter what.

Jill Bahm – Do we allow for cluster development?

Paula Lankford – Yes.

Jill Bahm – So we could say that the Master Plan envisions that this would be a cluster development where any new homes would be closer to Commerce Road, leaving this area here.

Weber – There's no way to develop, to put 150 homes on, which is what they were selling it for. The only way to solve that is to make it R-1A, and then allow the cluster development with much more greenspace within the total development site.

Karim – To keep this as an undeveloped area, does Commerce Township have to buy it?

Paula Lankford – Yes.

Chairperson Parel – Yes, but they don't want to sell it because they'll lose the tax base.

Costs of potential road improvements, expansions and connections were discussed, along with the planned sidewalk network, a gap that exists within those plans, and the need for boardwalks in some areas. Prioritizing pathway and sidewalk connections was

discussed, along with requirements for sidewalks to be installed, and the alternative to contribute to the Pathway Fund in lieu of installation in some areas.

Jill Bahm – We've gotten some really good information from you on the Village. We've talked about the hospital and its impact. I think that gets into, if we're talking about housing here and by the high school, are we business as usual allowing what we allow? Both of these properties are Long Farm, near the hospital.

Weber – Long is already R-1A.

Julia Upfal – This shows how many houses in each zoning district.

Weber – There's another property here that's for sale which I believe is part of the Long family.

Previous proposals for the north area were discussed.

Jill Bahm – At pretty much every discussion we have had, Sam has raised the point about having more local goods and services available to folks on the west end.

Weber – Sam, how do you balance that with our energy on putting something there; I don't know what the vision is, whether it's a 7-Eleven or something, versus putting energy into the Village? That isn't that far away. We already have a strip mall right here.

Karim – Yes, that's CVS.

Paula Lankford – But for the person who lives in that area, you don't have a grocery store. You have to go all the way to Kroger.

Loskill – There's a little grocery store up on Elizabeth Lake Road, just east of Oxbow Lake. If you haven't been by there, you'd miss it.

Weber – That's neighborhood commercial.

Paula Lankford – Yes, but there has to be a way that we can make it something other than 7-Eleven.

Open discussion continued regarding potentially appropriate locations for neighborhood commercial in the north end area, along with examples of small grocery stores and markets in other areas, and the distance to a grocery store for residents in the northwest area of Commerce Township.

Phillips – So this is all R-1A. Does it have to stay that way, or would you look at this possibly as higher density housing related to the hospital?

Loskill – I would say you'd want to talk to the hospital about that piece of land. If they have any expansion plans, that's the only spot for them to go.

Weber – Those discussions took place when there was land that we owned that we thought the hospital might be interested in, and they weren't.

Paula Lankford – That would be the well site.

Weber – Yes. And with the apple orchard, north of the hospital, I think there were discussions back in the day.

Loskill – This might be a good spot for support spaces for the hospital. You could put in a smaller housing development, a small market, or a small cluster development, or a small strip center with some services.

Karim – When we envision that area, that huge big piece of land is to be designed as residential with a small commercial center to serve the area, or, design it all as residential somehow connected to that area to be the commercial area where people will go. They'd have the option to come here or to go to that area to shop.

Chairperson Parel – Someone mentioned the shopping center on Carroll, Leo's center.

Weber – You've got Leo's here, and then you have CVS here.

Chairperson Parel – As of right now, we have enough vacancy in both, and we potentially have more retail coming to the Village if some of this comes to fruition. I think we may be better served to get these people from the hospital to those locations if possible.

Weber – That's this. Really, the hospital should be one of the more simple trails.

Jill Bahm – What about getting kids from Walled Lake Northern through here?

Chairperson Parel – This has been my theme from Day 1; Commerce Elementary, Walled Lake Northern; you have no way to get these kids to the Village, or the Library, or Dodge Park.

Jill Bahm – And you know they want to go to the Creamy Freeze.

Chairperson Parel – I live over here, and my kids can't get there.

Julia Upfal – I don't know if you guys saw it in the packet, but we had a word cloud from the Walled Lake Northern high school visit. We asked them where they could walk to from home. Most of them said the liquor store.

Chairperson Parel – A lot of kids who go to Smart walk to the Kroger center and Defy.

Weber – When we were talking about prioritizing connectivity, there were two priorities. It was the north to the Village and west to the Village, because we want that area to be a small hub. We wanted Cooley Lake Road to Commerce Road, so walkability along Commerce Road. And the other priority was getting to Five & Main, coming from the west, and having a way to get to another hub.

Chairperson Parel – We currently have no means to get this built, but maybe what we need is to prioritize our nonmotorized map accordingly. It is a priority for kids to be able to walk to the Library from school.

Weber – We're having discussions on funding and this is one of Larry's hot buttons.

Paula Lankford – Yes, he is working very hard on pathways and sidewalks.

Discussions continued regarding costs, funding, prioritizing trailway connections, and implementing infrastructure to increase walkability, which could thereby encourage additional development in the Village. Dangerous areas on the roadways were also discussed, such as Bogie Lake Road and Union Lake Road, which are not safe for pedestrians or bikes. There was a consensus that the energy should be put into the Village.

Weber – We need to put a map together and come up with the prioritization. Then it's the Board's job to figure out funding for the prioritization to implement the plan.

Jill Bahm – Right, and we can give some recommendations for their consideration.

Discussion took place regarding neighborhood commercial in the Village, including language in the Master Plan that we are focusing our energy on the Village, and providing guidance about expectations for the area. Weber felt this would be truly neighborhood commercial, such as a florist, or a small grocer. Paula Lankford clarified that the area is still zoned R-1A; it's just master planned as neighborhood commercial. Weber noted that it might be necessary to review the definition of neighborhood commercial. Paula Lankford added that it's usually B-1, such as a local bakery.

Weber – What slides didn't we get to?

Julia Upfal – This is the property tax that would be generated for each development, based on the number of houses from the last slide. This is based on the median home value of \$440,000 and then I used the property tax calculator for Commerce Township to calculate property taxes, then I multiplied out the property taxes by the number of houses. So just some commentary that density could provide additional revenue to the Township, as well as efficiencies in providing services.

Weber – I'm of the opinion that if you give the government money, they will spend it, and maybe not wisely, but it's going to get spent. Whereas, if you make them work a little bit harder to spend the tax dollars, they generally come up with more creative solutions. So, this argument doesn't resonate.

Julia Upfal – I think another way of looking at this is, if you have an industrial development on 20 acres, and it's worth \$10 million, a lot of times that's the number that people are looking at, but they're not considering that they have a finite amount of space within their boundaries. If you had housing there instead of that one industrial building on 20 acres, maybe you'd have much more revenue, but that's not something that is often considered.

Jill Bahm – Our next steps are to take everything that we’ve heard from both of the discussions that we’ve had and put together some fresh maps and text descriptions, and then review that with you. I think we will look at an Open House again to share everything that we’ve talked about with the community.

Chairperson Parel – Is May 1<sup>st</sup> our next special meeting, prior to our regularly scheduled meeting?

Paula Lankford – Do you want a special on May 1<sup>st</sup>?

Jill Bahm – Can we do all of this by then?

Chairperson Parel – Do we have to decide today? It is tentatively scheduled.

Jill Bahm – We can probably do the map and the text update for that meeting.

Julia Upfal – Whatever you feel is best.

Chairperson Parel – Instead of waiting until June, I think it’s best to try to ...

Jill Bahm – I like to keep on schedule, yes.

Paula Lankford – Okay, so 5:30pm on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Jill Bahm – Yes.

- **Next Special Meeting Date: May 1, 2023, at 5:30pm.**
- **Next Regular Meeting Date: May 1, 2023, at 7:00pm.**

#### **D. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Loskill, supported by Phillips, to adjourn the meeting at 7:14pm.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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Joe Loskill, Secretary