



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

CITY OF NOVI

Regular Meeting

January 29, 2014 7:00 PM

Council Chambers | Novi Civic Center | 45175 W. Ten Mile
(248) 347-0475

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at or about 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Member Baratta, Member Giacometti, Member Greco, Member Lynch, Chair Pehrson, Member Zuchlewski

Absent: Member Anthony (excused)

Also Present: Barbara McBeth, Deputy Director of Community Development; Kristen Kapelanski, Planner; Gary Dovre, City Attorney; Adam Wayne, Staff Engineer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Member Greco led the meeting attendees in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Member Lynch, seconded by Member GRECO:

VOICE VOTE ON THE AGENDA APPROVAL MOTION MADE BY MEMBER LYNCH AND SECONDED BY MEMBER GRECO:

Motion to approve the January 29, 2014 Planning Commission Agenda. Motion carried 6-0.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Todd Rankine of Singh Development wanted to express a couple of thoughts regarding the Town Center Study. Singh Development has owned the property at the southeast corner of Eleven Mile and Town Center for sixteen years and over that time, has tried to develop or sell the property under the current zoning and uses to no avail. We have attended the few meetings for the Town Center Study and we voiced some thoughts then and would like to express tonight that we feel that the proposed Master Plan study for hotel and office is a little too restrictive for the current market place. There just is not a demand for hotel or office in this location. In addition, the southern piece of the two that we own, it's about 2.3 acres, actually has a deed restriction against hotels. So we'd like to see if there is an opportunity to be a little creative with what we can do here planning-wise to maybe extend the Main Street concept up across Grand River and introduce some residential uses. We think residential uses would be great in this location. The rooftops could help support the existing retail establishments. We would just like to see if there's anything we could do to get those uses up into that area. We've tried to do something with that property and there's just no market for it.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no Correspondence.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no Committee Reports.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPUTY DIRECTOR REPORT

Deputy Director McBeth mentioned at the City Council meeting on January 21st, the Preserve at Island Lake, Phase 9 was approved as an amendment to the RUD. That plan is for an additional 45 single-family homes to the Island Lake development at the northeast corner of Ten Mile and Napier Road. A couple of other items I wanted to share, in front of the Commission this evening are the City Council goals that were prepared at a recent study session and identify the City Council's priorities for the upcoming years.

That leads me to the next item which is the Planning Commission and Planning Division budget items. We're in the midst of preparing budget requests for the next fiscal year. We need to turn those requests in over the next month or so. In the past the Planning Commission has had its own budget line item, whereas this year it's combined with the Planning Division. We'll likely be presenting some items that will cover both the Planning Commission and Planning Division, but if in the meantime anybody has any thoughts about special studies or other items that may need to go into the budget, please feel free to let us know.

CONSENT AGENDA - REMOVALS AND APPROVAL

There are no Consent items to discuss.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no Public Hearings.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. TOWN CENTER AREA STUDY

Deputy Director Barbara McBeth said the City Council approved funding this fiscal year for review of the Town Center area of the City. This includes properties at all four corners of the intersection of Grand River Ave and Novi Road; both north and south of Grand River Ave, and east and west of Novi Rd, south of the I-96 interchange. During the course of the work that has been done over the last six months, people have asked us why it is important to review the Town Center area at this time. Our answer has included a number of reasons. First, geographically, Grand River Avenue and Novi Road is a significant intersection in the City of Novi, with considerable pass-by and destination traffic to and from the homes and businesses in this area. Secondly, there is significant value in the properties at this key intersection of the City, including more than \$88 million of taxable value. Thirdly, there has been significant public and private reinvestment in this area in recent years, combined with the renewed energy brought by a number of new land owners. Finally, it is important to study this area because more than 25 years have passed since the Town Center area was first envisioned.

We believe it is time to review and re-evaluate the guiding documents, and ordinance standards for this important area of the City, so that moving forward, the master planning and ordinance documents reflect the current vision and direction that the City leaders wish to take in future developments in the area. There are three tasks that are included in Town Center area Study: review the recommendations of the Master Plan for Land Use, review the Zoning Ordinance standards and the Town Center Design Guidelines, and review and make recommendations for Wayfinding signage. For the Town Center Study, the City's consultant, Carlisle Wortman has been working extensively on the project over the last few months with City staff. The Planning Commission previously heard presentations from the consultant on this topic and learned about the progress of the study, both in late summer and the fall.

For tonight's presentation on the draft report, all of the property owners in the study area were notified by U.S. mail, and the report has been on the City's webpage since last week. The notice invited the public to view the study online, contact the department directly, provide written comments, or attend tonight's meeting. We have been collecting those comments since the draft report was posted, and will include updates to the report as appropriate, moving forward, including any comments the Planning Commission may have. Planning staff and our consultants are very pleased with the progress made, and the manner in which the study has come together so far. Tonight, our consultant Don Wortman, is going to provide a brief presentation draft study. Sally Elmiger is also present and has been working extensively on this project. Following tonight's presentation and discussion, the Planning Commission will be asked to accept the draft document, with or without modifications. The document, with any suggested revisions will then be forwarded to the City Council for review and consideration. The final document will return to the Planning Commission for approval, and so that we may begin to implement the recommendations.

Don Wortman said it's a pleasure to be here this evening. As Barb indicated, I would like to recognize the City staff for their contributions and assisting us with this report. Also, Sally Elmiger from our office is here. I also want to recognize our partners on this that is Hamilton Anderson from Detroit, our architects, and also Graphic Vision who assisted with the wayfinding. I have a slide presentation I wanted to share and then I'd be happy to answer any questions. Barb indicated that we were here in August and provided you a summary and we had a meeting with you again in November, but tonight it's a culmination. It was a lot of hard work, but we're pleased to present this final document and want to hear your comments.

The purpose of this study was really to update the City's master plan, zoning regulations and previous work that was done. Much of this work was done back in 1986, there have been multiple studies that have taken a look at this and I think it was our task was to step back and take a hard look at what was already done and then come up with recommendations. It also builds on the rejuvenation with the Town Center area. Certainly with the Wal-Mart coming on board and the Simon Properties development, parcels are starting to be re-energized and I think we've suffered long enough with the recession and I think certainly there's been an economic upturn in the area as well as other communities, so it's a good opportunity and the timing is right to take a look at this area. We want to look at and examine opportunities for land use and zoning. We also want to anticipate the future extension of the ring road, specifically Crescent Boulevard, Flint Street and Main Street. All of these have come into play and the timing is right to do this report and take a look at this area.

The study involved a number of components. We looked at existing data and divided up the area into ten separate subareas, as presented at the November meeting. We also were involved with a public input process that helped us develop this vision. We evaluated the physical characteristics and came up with specific recommendations for land use and zoning. The public input process involved stakeholder interviews; eleven of them were with major property owners in the area. We also conducted an informal open house on September 11 for all the property owners to attend, where we received a number of comments. There was also an ongoing survey that was posted to the City's website and we encouraged property owners and residents to provide us their comments regarding the future direction of the Town Center area and what would be preferred land uses. The public input paralleled our work.

Some of the themes that were reported during this public input process was that the strongest land use market was for residential and office. There was a certain sentiment that the commercial and retail areas might be over built in the area but the strongest markets were for residential and office. We have heard that in other communities as well. The other thing that we noted in terms of a theme is that there is an opportunity to attract young professionals with multi-story and loft style buildings. Many communities are trying to attract the millennials and create a vibrant core. I think there certainly are opportunities there with that. The other theme we heard was that there was an opportunity for traffic calming, specifically on Grand River and Novi Road. We understand that it is under the jurisdiction of Oakland County, but there are some opportunities there. The themes also supported the ring road and that would provide you with a perimeter road to help relieve some of the traffic congestion, especially at Grand River and Novi Road. Another theme too is the walkable aspect. It's still a very viable concept but certainly the sidewalks need some improvements and we can move some of the pedestrian nodes closer to the building entrances and that would help with the pedestrian aspect of this study. So those were some of the themes that were uncovered as part of the public input process.

Those themes tied into the vision that was ultimately formed and incorporated into our report and that is that the development of the Town Center area will create a dynamic and attractive city core that provides residents and visitors with unique opportunities to participate in active community life and meet the needs for good services, housing and entertainment. This is the vision that we're proposing and involving into the various study aspects. Within this framework plan, you can see the ring road. You can also see the main nodes, the intersection of Novi Road and Grand River, as well as Grand River and Town Center Drive. There are opportunities for green space, pedestrian connections and future land use

improvements. This combined with the vision provided the overall framework plan.

From that, we evolved into an analysis of Master Plan and Land Use updates. We came up with specific recommendations for preferred land uses as well as the form and design for each one of these subareas. The preferred land uses are going to be tied to future Master Plan adjustments that the City may wish to consider. The form and design will help tie into any possible zoning adjustment that you may wish to use. So let's go through these subareas and see more specifically what some of the recommendations are.

The first one is the northwest area and the Flint Street area. The intent is for this area is a gateway into the Town Center area. The preferred land uses involve restaurants, coffee shops, retail and office. It could also have office-research-technology, especially for the Flint Street area where it is abutting the railroad. We get into specifics in terms of form and design, the pedestrian orientation and possibly shared parking in the rear. One of the opportunities, especially with the Flint Street area is the use of the Middle Rouge River. If that could be opened up and used as an amenity, we would encourage the City to include the Middle Rouge in terms of the future land use designs for that specific area. With this too, we also worked with the staff in terms of recommendations for future realignment for Flint Street. That is also tied into that proposed sub area and specific recommendations.

The next area, we call the Trans-X area, is also a gateway into the Town Center area. There is an opportunity for retail and office and even public market or specialty foods, produce and gifts, and restaurants. We also made recommendations in terms of the form and design of the building, to reduce setbacks. The Trans-X area is certainly an opportunity in terms of redevelopment and future land use growth.

We also looked at Main Street. This is one of the main areas in terms of public involvements with comments from the property owners. The intent for the Main Street areas is mixed-use. It's a city center style development with commercial and residential uses. The preferred land uses would be residential, especially on the south side of Main Street, and also mixed-use development that could include commercial at the corners. The form would be dense, multi-family loft townhouse or mixed-use commercial and office. It would be three to five stories in height. One of the recommendations is to allow first floor residential. Your Zoning Ordinance currently does not allow that, but we think that by allowing residential on the first floor this will provide greater opportunities. We heard this comment from a number of property owners and developers. Another opportunity would be to use some of the open space and ponds for additional pedestrian amenities and outdoor event areas that would be designed within the Main Street area. This was an important focus in the Town Center Study and certainly moving forward, especially with residential growth. This would help maintain the viability of the Town Center area and if we could encourage residential, you will see a much more vibrant portion of the community.

Another area we looked at was the Grand River and Novi business area. This is the spine of the Town Center area. We encourage that to be dense, walkable and easily accessible. Preferred land uses would be retail, restaurants, and outdoor cafes. The form and design would be pedestrian oriented with intensive landscaping and even possible pedestrian refuge islands with reduced speeds along Grand River and Novi Road. There would be openings to the screen walls to businesses but we came up with specific design recommendations for this particular area. In many parts of this area we find it to be very attractive already. They are well managed, landscaped and pleasant. But I think moving forward; there still are areas in which there are opportunities for redevelopment.

The Town Center area includes much of the Simon Properties and the Wal-Mart. This would be intended to continue as a regional commercial center. There would be allowances for large format retail for future land uses. In continuation of that, there would be opportunities for shopping centers and general retail and then a continuation of restaurants and outdoor cafes. We think that, in terms of the form and design, maintain that unified brick façade, it's attractive and should continue to be used. Also, the

continuation of the pedestrian connections is important.

Another area that we look at is what we call the Anglin area, that's the location of the former car wash along Grand River. The intent here is to provide a gateway into the Town Center area and also there are opportunities for pedestrian orientation. It would be an excellent site for future retail uses or professional offices, research and technology. The form and design could again be pedestrian oriented. It could provide those connections to the core area, but there's also a unique pond on the site that could be used as a focal point. We've included a photo of what could be done there by using that pond as an amenity that could be associated with future land use of office or retail type uses. I think it was good to look at this particular area because some type of development will likely occur within that specific area.

The Hotel/Office area was also looked at and this would continue the Town Center area's regional appeal. We are recommending continuation of the hotel uses. I might also add that this is currently zoned OSC which also allows office uses in addition to hotels. The form and design would be to provide large lot areas for hotels and office/research/technology. There's also a pond there as well. The best stormwater practices could be utilized within this particular area.

Lee BeGole Drive was also looked at and here we have some existing municipal service areas but there are also opportunities for office, research and technology, some outside storage as long as it was properly screened. I might add too that the continuation of that ring road, tying in Lee BeGole Drive to the roadway system to the west would provide a unique feature. Likewise, there's a pond there that could be a focal point for future development that again would provide a very attractive area.

Those were the ten subareas that were looked at. We identified preferred land uses for all of those areas that could be combined for future master plan adjustments.

The next area that we looked at was what zoning changes are appropriate in this area? Specifically, we looked at the TC and the TC-1 Districts. There are some parts of the intent section in the Zoning Ordinance that we feel need to be updated, specifically where it talks about collective parking. The City is really not doing that so we feel that the intent section for both the TC and TC-1 should be updated. If you're not going to use collective parking arrangements and it's all going to be private self-parking then the intent should reflect that. The other thing that needs to be done is to update the permitted uses. We need to define the performing arts, add pharmacies without drive-through, extended stay hotels, greenmarkets, and allowance of residential uses on the first floor. I had mentioned that earlier, but the staff and our office feel that allowing first floor residential would be an appropriate adjustment. Then also, prohibit individual garages that are front facing with the façade. These types of zoning adjustments would be beneficial.

In terms of the special uses, there's a requirement right now that drive-through restaurants cannot be located closer than 150 feet to each other. We feel that the City should look at that. We also think that they should add updated land uses such as incubator workshop areas, pharmacies with drive-throughs, and outdoor farmers markets.

Another item we also looked at was the schedule of regulations in the Zoning Ordinance. Right now there is a restriction that limits the gross leasable floor area. You're trying to create smaller lease space areas from 7,500 square feet, that is the cap right now. An example would be a Rite-Aid or CVS, which is about 13,000 square feet. By restricting it to 7,500 square feet, you're limiting it to just a certain amount of smaller shops. By opening it up a bit more, you could provide for more economic opportunities without sacrificing the intent of the Town Center area. The other items in terms of adjustments are clarifying the clear vision for non-residential and collector streets, in other words, the driveway clearances, the adjustments to the setbacks for residential from 30 to 15 feet. If you're trying to create a compact type community, a 30 foot setback from the right-of-way is a bit restrictive. Also, the required 10 foot setback

for residential buildings with side windows, that ties into a building code issue too. The other item is to clarify the meanings of interior and exterior lots. If you look at your schedule of regulations, we found it confusing with how it was measured. So certainly, some adjustments could be done moving forward here on zoning changes.

With regard to off-street parking, some adjustments could involve adding guidelines for shared parking lots if you are going to entertain that. Some communities have new and updated zoning regulations regarding the use and how that could be accomplished. In terms of the pedestrian amenities we'd also make some suggestions for alternative transportation and require larger non-residential uses that exceed certain thresholds to provide public or pedestrian amenities. If you have a relatively large lot of 150 feet of frontage or there was a building that exceeded a certain size, include a requirement that the developer provide some type of an amenity such as a public plaza, art or attractive landscape feature. There should be criteria included in the Zoning Ordinance as to when these types of amenities are going to be required as part of the site plan approval.

The other adjustment we're talking about is modifying the brick and decorative paving. Brick pavers are very nice in the area but they have to be carefully used. They are a maintenance problem. In Michigan, with the frost and winters, when you use extensive brick it can become a maintenance headache. So we're continuing to recommend the brick, but use it carefully. Another thing that we'd like to recommend is with your requirements for screening with a reliance on brick. We find that the better and more attractive screening walls would be ones where you incorporate brick columns with decorative metal fencing and landscaping. It provides a little bit more of a transparency and feeling of openness and I think that just relying too much on the brick there is too much of an enclosure. So we'd encourage more of a semi-transparent buffering between the parking lot, sidewalk and public road. Another item that we're making a recommendation on is to promote alternative transportation and transit concepts. I think we need to be bike friendly. The City also needs to look at alternative transportation systems in terms of future bus service or ride sharing arrangements. But I think we need to be cognizant of this moving forward during your site plan review procedures.

In the design guideline amendments, we specifically looked at some of your design guidelines and architectural requirements. One is the requirement for the cooper roof. We feel that by modifying that and allowing great flexibility, future developments would be better served. Just reliance and requirement for cooper is dated. The price of cooper is high now and many times if you're doing a standing seam roof, there are baked on finished already. I think that what you want to do is allow the developer to have a little bit more flexibility in looking at this. The same thing goes for allowing the building materials too. We looked at these and came up with specific recommendations in our report.

Finally, moving on to the zoning map, we highlighted two areas where we think that zoning map adjustments need to be done. Specifically, the Anglin area, to rezone that from OSC to OS-1 or TC. Also, the Trans-X area which is currently industrial, should be rezoned to TC.

Also, we looked at the design guidelines that are contained in your Zoning Ordinance. The intent is to provide a pedestrian network, but to give it a better sense of comfort and safety through the use of the landscape and pedestrian scaled amenities. Specifically, sidewalks which would be six to ten feet wide. I'd suggest connecting the buildings with the parking lots. I mentioned with the pavers using it as an accent only. Then also having larger projects provide more and/or larger scale amenities such as public art, pedestrian plazas and certain type of amenities that would be especially attractive to the Town Center area. But that could be spelled out for those larger areas, perhaps it could be based on frontage or building size.

We also looked at lighting in your Ordinance. Currently, the City is embarking on a program with DTE Energy for specific lights. They are being used on the major roads and some of the internal roads, and we

broke the lighting recommendations down into three main tiers. The tier one would be the DTE lights for Grand River and Novi Road. The tier two type lights would be more on the internal drive such as Town Center, Crescent Boulevard or Crow Drive. Then tier three would be more of the pedestrian oriented lights. This could utilize an acorn or the cobra head of decorative metal head. Specific lighting fixture guidelines are included within this report.

We also provided recommendations on site furnishing within the Town Center area, specifically for benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, fences and decorative materials. Recommendations were made for landscaping in relation to the planters, tree grades and the irrigation of the landscape bends.

As far as the building façade, we looked at the current standards in your Ordinance and then made recommendations for possible adjustments. The other thing that we pointed out too was that racing cars are an opportunity for public art. You may have seen this design in other communities, but certain communities have used these types, be it a painted pig or cow, but our recommendation for Novi is to consider possible racing cars that would use the historical heritage and importance of Novi as an auto center. But this could be included within certain street and pedestrian improvements and I think it would provide for a unique feature.

We did talk about some plazas within the design guidelines. The larger plazas should be located closer to the retail uses. The ways they are used now, along Grand River, are not applied appropriately in some places. If you're going to be using a pedestrian plaza, there has to be a connection to a main building or main entrance or restaurant. Our recommendation is if you are going to use a pedestrian plaza or require a developer to put that in, it has to be easily accessed, provide a sense of enclosure and be designed to accommodate a specific function like an outdoor performance, vendor stalls or related to a restaurant.

We've covered the Master Plan and the Land Use recommendations and the zoning adjustments and the design guidelines. The last component of the study involves wayfinding signs. The purpose is to assist the motorist and pedestrians to easily find the destinations in the Town Center area. As a visitor, the Town Center area can be a little bit confusing, especially in terms of the internal roads and how to access it from Novi Road and Grand River. Wayfinding signs, if they are installed, can provide the visitors appropriate direction. There are requirements though from the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC). Keep in mind that they do have jurisdiction over Grand River and Novi Road. Whatever they are going to approve must be in compliance with the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. This would apply to these wayfinding signs. The two types of designs that we've come up with include a pedestrian scale and vehicular scale sign. The vehicular scale sign would comply with the RCOC requirements and the Uniform Traffic Design requirements. They are larger than the pedestrian scale but one of the suggestions is to consider these designs and work with RCOC. We recommend that a meeting be held with RCOC officials to explore exactly what they would approve. Our preference would be something pedestrian scaled. It would be smaller, less expensive and it could be a fix to the existing street lights or traffic signals. But if that is not specifically allowed, then consideration of the larger signs would be fine. Either way, the design is incorporated. One of the things that we wanted to do was to build onto the City's current use of the blue and gold. So that theme has been carried over into these signage prototypes. Again, this will all need further coordination with RCOC.

The next steps on this would be to receive your comments tonight. We would be happy to make some additional adjustments in terms of finalizing the document. Barb has mentioned that this could be presented in the future to your City Council. I think the main point tonight is to receive your comments. Again, we do appreciate the efforts working with City staff. It has been a fun project. I think you've got a unique area within the City of Novi. There are opportunities for development and redevelopment. It is certainly our hope that this study will provide that long-term guidance and vision moving forward. By making those adjustments to your Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance, this analysis will provide that vision

for appropriate growth and development within the Town Center. With that, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Chair Pehrson opened up the discussion to the Planning Commission.

Member Zuchlewski said there was discussion in the package about relocating the old fire house on Eleven Mile and I didn't hear any of that. Is that still in the thought process?

Mr. Wortman said we did make recommendations in terms of municipal services, specifically the Anglin site and Flint Street. These are two areas that could be considered for future locations for municipal services.

Deputy Director McBeth said there's another study that's taking place simultaneous with this study and there has been coordination with Mr. Wortman and the consultant for the Department of Public Services for needs analysis for the fire station. The consultant for that project has worked with us to talk about fire station number 1 - what it needs to modernize it. If it needs to relocate, we've taken a look several alternative spots within this study area. Those are referenced in this study, but will also be referenced in the study that is going in a parallel track for possible other locations in the vicinity if it does need to relocate.

Member Zuchlewski said with the current speeds of Grand River and Novi Road being 45 miles per hour, and there was discussion about the road commission; does the road commission dictate the speed of traffic? Would it be possible to put roundabouts or something like that to slow traffic down to make the area more pedestrian-friendly, instead of just putting in pedestrian safety paths?

Mr. Wortman said with roundabouts, we'd get into an issue with available right-of-way. What we are encouraging the city to explore are possible pedestrian refuge islands. Long-term, I know there has been some discussion or consideration regarding a boulevard. Again, these are all long-range. The exact feasibility, we did not examine in detail. The Road Commission for Oakland County has control over these roads. It would be up to them. From a planners' perspective, slowing the traffic down is not necessarily a bad idea within that area. Then also, making it more pedestrian friendly would be a good idea. We did a field survey on a couple occasions. Crossing Grand River at Novi Road made us feel like we were the only pedestrians all day long that crossed that street. But if we can get more people out on the sidewalk crossing the roads, making it feel more pedestrian friendly, I think it will also benefit the land use, appearance and function of that area. Many communities have used these pedestrian refuge islands. That is something that could be explore with the current right-of-way, but in terms of the traffic engineering, we did not get into the details.

Member Zuchlewski said he has two more questions. We're talking about opening up the Middle Rouge River, does that get us into flood plain issues? There's more to it than just opening it up. Will it affect the current owners there?

Mr. Wortman said if you did anything, it could involve Department of Environmental Quality permits. However, the point is you have a very attractive amenity and if a walkway could be incorporated along the Middle Rouge, it would be a great area. A restaurant could have a small deck and residential areas could look out on it. Rather than enclosing it, open it up and use it.

Member Zuchlewski said he likes the concept, but was just thinking of what you're going to run into. The public input, you indicated that it was both commercial owners and residential. The numbers of residential people that came out and gave input was very small. We really didn't get a lot of interest from people that live there, yet we're taking a lot of time and effort for these people to give them what we think they want. Is there a way to have another go around at the people that are really going to

benefit from this and the people who are going to pay for it in their taxes? Do they really want all these things that we're talking about giving them? And it seems like we have to take all these issues on if we're going to be able to give it to them. We're going to have to calm the traffic. You made the same point that I did when I walked in that area. It was like you have to take your life into your hands; you've got to be quick. If you are over 60, then you've really got to be careful. So that's an issue. We could do all these other things, and if that particular thing isn't solved, I see this failing because you want people to be able to commute. You want a boulevard, something slow. I try and think through history how these plazas worked out. They all worked around residential areas, which came first. When the people were there, and then came vendors. Your recommendation was to have more people downtown living in that area.

Member Baratta said when I look at this particular area, I draw a parallel to what Troy is doing on Big Beaver Road and in my viewpoint it's pretty similar. As you come in off of Troy and go south off of I-75, Troy did a good job because they put restaurants right on that southwest corner and they've got hotels going behind it. So when we look at this northwest area and I think we've done a pretty good job to put some retail up on Novi Road there, and I think it's looking very nice. Have you taken into consideration where the former expo was into that planning of that particular area?

Mr. Wortman said we did not. That was beyond our subarea analysis. That was part of the discussion but no we didn't get into that. You're talking about the Adell water tower?

Member Baratta said yes.

Mr. Wortman said no, we did not touch on that.

Member Baratta asked if having such a large track of land not backing into this northwest area would be an issue. If you look at Troy with the restaurants upfront with two hotels going behind it, those hotels are going to provide some traffic to those restaurants. So it seemed to me that we may want to look at the area, if we could add that area to our study.

Deputy Director McBeth said the reason why it was not added to the study this time is because that area was just looked at a couple of years ago as part of a Master Plan study that was done. A detail was provided in the Master Plan documents at that time that showed potential redevelopment plan for that property. We have heard that there is some interest in doing a plan similar to that. So that previous plan was taken into consideration as part of this review. We didn't want to over study that area, but we recognized a study had recently been done for that.

Member Baratta said so you basically adjusted this to account for that?

Deputy Director McBeth said yes.

Member Baratta said really when I look at it, I think the Town Center area is in pretty good shape. I think we have significant weaknesses in the Main Street area. I happened to be there this past weekend and it really has a lot of vacancies. When I look at the area and the Tran-X area, I wonder if we had that market on the south side of that Main Street area. We do have a little plaza at the corner where Main Street goes north and intersects, you could add some more traffic down there. Right now, the multistory buildings are pretty vacant so I think that would add some traffic as opposed to just residential. Maybe the residential could be moved to another area because I agree that there should be more residential. Have you taken that into consideration that if your public market area was south of Main Street there as opposed to up against Novi Road, rather that would be any benefit to the rest of the plaza there?

Mr. Wortman said at the corners, we considered mixed-use. Certainly, that would accommodate that public market. But the idea is residential in the middle along Main Street and then mixed-uses, including

commercial, at the corners.

Member Baratta said Todd Rankine from Singh brought this up earlier, but correct me if I've got the wrong area. I think you were talking about the southeast corner of Eleven Mile and Town Center as we define as the Anglin area, is that the property you were talking about?

Mr. Rankine said no, we're on the north side of Eleven Mile.

Member Baratta said his question was, you've got a pond in the Anglin area, is that an area we could put in more residential? Would that improve that area as opposed to what we have proposed in the plan of more office?

Mr. Wortman said they looked at that as well. It would be better suited for a commercial or office type of usage and utilizing that pond around there. It's a gateway too, on the perimeter, and we were especially paying attention to the perimeter areas. As you said, the Town Center area is stable. The interior part of the Town Center is pretty stable, but it's the perimeter areas that I think are subject to change. It could be either vacant or transitional. But that Anglin parcel is one that has a unique opportunity but a gateway development is preferred.

Member Baratta said so you think offices around that periphery of that pond. Do you think that if you had a little bit more residential in the office-hotel area that is just north of that with maybe residential behind the pond or the north side of the pond? Would that make any sense?

Mr. Wortman said they could look at it. Our preferences were retail, professional offices, research and technology in this location. Getting into residential north of Grand River, I think it might be better suited further to the south along the Main Street area.

Member Baratta said is that because it's trapped there?

Mr. Wortman said well it's been successful already. The residential component that Singh developed is already successful. What we want to do is finish the project along Main Street and that's an ideal location for the residential.

Member Baratta confirmed it would just be expanding that residential Singh area that is there.

Member Zuchlewski said I'm maybe confused as to what we want to do with this and what is our objective. I see our objective as being to make this a walkable community within what's already there. So if we take the residential and stick it off in a corner some place, I don't think it's going to work. What has to happen is the residents need to be dispersed around various parcels and in various areas. Everything from the Cheesecake Factory to Fishbones and we're putting in all these walks for people to walk on. I don't think there's going to be a whole lot of them at least in the evening or after working hours if we put in a lot of office in these areas. I think the offices can go up and down Grand River, but if you want to make this walkable, convenient and safe, then you've got to get people in these areas. I think sticking them all in one corner is not going to do it.

Member Greco said I'm going to expand on what Member Zuchlewski is talking about here. What I liked about the study in general is when I first moved to Novi and started the Planning Commission, there has always been a lot of talk about Main Street area and the residential that may not be everything that we want there. But I'm concerned with the general thought of this area as far as creating a downtown area, it's hard to build them. They just kind of appear. That's why I like this study because it acknowledges those things and has those things along Main Street and the residential area. I understand that we want to make it pedestrian friendly, but I didn't get the impression from the study that we were trying to re-

create a downtown area which I don't think that we can do. I guess my only concern was the gentleman with Singh Development with the hotel and office area there. He seemed to be indicating that they're having some issues developing that. That again, moves from the conceptual, what looks like a good idea and a mix to what is practical, but what do you see for that area in keeping it hotel office? Are we hoping that it gets better or is it just that having residential there doesn't really work with the Town Center area blocking them off from Main Street.

Mr. Wortman said yes, I think the proximity with Wal-Mart has an influence on it and that's one of the factors that didn't work. Also, the road system within that area, we had some concerns regarding that. We did open it up and make a suggestion for extended stay hotels, which might be a market. Automotive engineers that come in for six months at a time, perhaps it could be broadened for that. So that particular parcel would still best be served as hotel and office type uses but also to allow that extended stay option.

Deputy Director McBeth said I think one of the problems that has plagued this area for a number of years is the idea that it might be considered a downtown. It wasn't originally a downtown, it's a private development project. It isn't truly a mixed-use area or one that would be considered a traditional downtown. City staff has been discussing this for some time, trying to think of a better name that would be more appropriate. We thought about City Center and Town Center. One that we were talking about today was a Central Business District - that gives you the idea that there are business activities that go on there but there may also be some residential and non-commercial kinds of activities there as well. We don't really have anything that we've settled on at this point, but we're maybe going more into that direction as opposed to calling it an urban core, or downtown area.

Member Lynch said I know everyone is looking at this and trying to find out how to get people down there and I'm looking at this and thinking why would I go? We don't have a big theatre that's well-known or a sports arena. Like downtown Detroit right now is thriving. I mean you can't build enough lofts down there. But you've got Quicken Loans and all the people that are pumping money into that and I'm just thinking to myself, why would I go down there? I mean what's the anchor? What's the thing that really attracts me to go down there? I think you did a great job, but I'm just having a problem trying to understand. Obviously, we can't be a Birmingham or Northville. We certainly don't have the infrastructure that downtown Detroit has, we don't have the casinos and all that stuff where people walk around. I'm just wondering what's the big draw? What's going to bring a business down there? I mean I can see if somebody located their world headquarters there, then that would probably make sense but I don't see that happening.

Mr. Wortman said one part of the equation is the restaurants. Those are already there. The shopping is already there. One of the parts that we emphasize in our report is there's opportunities for the public open space or park areas. You've got three pond areas that are underutilized. You've got the Middle Rouge River which is underutilized. I think by having an open space amenity, there could be a private/public partnership in developing these. I think that would certainly be a draw. Then the other part of this is residential. I think residential is coming back, we've seen it in all of our communities that we represent in southeastern Michigan. We're beyond the recession now and developers are back in the game. You can get Main Street developed and attract the millennials with these loft style apartments. It would provide a different housing style and option that you want in your community. This would be one type that would be walkable, close to entertainment, good restaurants and shopping. That is desirable. I think it's a combination of the park amenities, public and private partnership, developing those ponds, and continuation of the pedestrian orientation. That's key too because what differentiates Grand River or Novi Road from Telegraph Road is the compactness of the buildings, the buildings up close to the sidewalk and the pedestrian amenities that you're trying to create and maintain. Otherwise, you're just going to be developing a traditional strip corridor and I don't think you want that here.

Member Lynch said I'm glad you brought that up because you're going exactly where I wanted you to. It looks like residential is the key here. If I want to live in that area, having more targeted green space would be good. My next question is, why don't I dedicate more land to residential? There's residential area here, is that large enough? What you're telling me is the reason I would go there is because I want to live there and is that appropriate? Should it be larger?

Mr. Wortman said I think you've got plenty of area for at least the next five to ten years of growth. You're going to need to look at this again, if the growth demand for residential starts going off the chart, then maybe you need to make other adjustments. But for right now, given an appropriate absorption rate, you've got enough land now along Main Street for residential.

Member Lynch said so we could improve the residential if we just develop some of the natural amenities. Well that makes sense.

Mr. Wortman said we're a little cautious of this too because we don't want to take private property and put it on the Master Plan as park area. So I mean when we're talking about this public/private partnership, it would have to be smaller in scale, but still if it's appropriately designed I think it could be a really unique feature.

Member Lynch said then that would meet the objective of the residential, okay. I don't know much about the hotel area, whether or not there are enough hotels in the greater Detroit area, I'll leave that up to the experts but you've answered my question.

Member Giacometti said I want to congratulate you because I think this is a great study. It reflects a lot of my ideas as well. To me high-rise residential living would blend in nicely with office and hotels that are there and I think that would provide a diversity of housing options. I don't know what we would need to recommend to encourage that diversity. This group has seen a lot of proposals from developers and they're for very high-end housing. I haven't seen anything that I believe would attract millennials. Really, this is a pro-growth plan. This is to attract new residents and a different kind of resident. I agree with Member Greco, it's the people that make the downtown then the businesses follow. If I were to recommend any changes for this to work, it would be to include residential zoning in those areas.

Chair Pehrson said I too agree with most of the comments and certainly Member Greco, but I appreciate and would like to thank you for putting this together because I think what it does is finally helps us tie together and draw the consistency and uniformity that we're trying to do for the downtown. I use the word downtown only because I'm old school. I've given up the idea of Novi having a downtown like Northville or Birmingham, but I'm looking at this more as the Greek town. When you go into the different areas, you get a different sense or flavor and I think with the way that you've broken it up into the ten little areas, I think that is a way for us to possibly take advantage of our cultural diversity inside the City and tie that together. I also agree with the idea that I don't want to limit where residential should and shouldn't go because we do need people in the area to be able to drive the consistent growth that we have here. I think this is going to turn out to be more like a retro area like Ferndale or Royal Oak. You've got the building structures that have the flexibility to be multi-use where you aren't building it for Dick's Sporting Goods, but you're allowing some flexibility in the building so that as the trends change and it has the ability to become loft-ish. It becomes a little bit more classic of a Royal Oak or Ferndale.

Chair Pehrson said, the idea of changing some of the Ordinances, I think, are spot on, especially with the building materials. I think we sometimes get locked into what we know of today and those building materials are changing faster than we could put those into paper. So I'd like to see a wider array of building materials available for the builders to bring in that are harmonious with the idea of the Town Center but don't lock them into brick. You mentioned bike paths and pedestrian foot traffic and I think that's key. I look at the idea and remind myself with the ponds that are there, I think there's an

opportunity to bring nature into that area. Relative to the Middle Rouge River, we have to take advantage of that as a natural feature and be able to create a little river walk. The one thing that I'd like to see in some of the ordinances is with the blacked out windows. I don't know what those businesses are from just driving down Novi Road, I have to go around the other side to see. I like the idea a lot about incorporating the Novi history into the project. Whatever this is and however we theme it, rather it's with the Novi Special or the diversity. I think it's a great opportunity to become that iconic thing that we can drive going forward.

Chair Pehrson said, the only other points I have going forward are the art work and we need to tie that in. If we had something of a tipping point theatre, something that can draw people in then we're starting to combine the youth that wants to live there and feel vibrant about that with the old farts, like Mr. Lynch and spend the night. I use that term with all due respect. Give him the opportunity to see that and feel that. There's a great opportunity for the band shell and farmers market to be a part of the central district on Main Street. I think it's also important that we have some of those smaller shops because while I agree with increasing the size of some of the square footages for CVS types of places, I really would hate to see a large CVS in this area and take away from the mom-and-pop shop kind of a thing that want to sell cupcakes or T-shirts or something like that that fits in with the idea of strolling along the street. I don't want it to become just something associated with the big box. And I like the idea with the hotel area, that's a perfect place for high-rise something residential. I think that along the I-696/96 corridor there, we've often talked about high-rise buildings, maybe that's what Adell might bring into play. But I could see us evolving into that as well and using the freeway as a marketing tool for the entirety of whatever we're going to call this area.

Chair Pehrson said, the one thing that I'd like to see relative to your nodes for pedestrian walkways is that they have to tie into the buildings. We have these things that are isolated to themselves. I want to make sure that the maintenance of some of those amenities. Also, I'm not a big fan of having some of those amenities sitting right on Grand River or Novi Road. I've never wanted to go into an area at sit down on a bench and watch traffic go up and down. I want to be in and among something where I can hear the music playing for the restaurant and watch the people, as opposed to smelling exhaust. But applause to everybody who had a hand in this because I think it really starts to tie in that vision that we've always had for this area. So I really appreciate your time and effort on it, thank you.

Member Baratta said I have a couple more comments. As it relates to the big box, all retailers are getting smaller. I know they're all getting smaller, being a retailer myself. So I support your suggestion that the boxes stay on the smaller side. My other issue is, when you're bringing up those blacked out windows, one thing that some of the retailers are starting to do is put a lifestyle graphic on those windows to give you that look as if it's not blacked out. I know why we do it, you have an Ordinance that says you have to have a window and we're looking at every square foot when we justify a budget. But there's a good way of doing that and still have a really nice appearance and to meet that. The other point I would suggest to you as you look at this area and you take our comments into consideration, but I'd look at this entire intersection and provide some sort of use to attract people here on a regular basis. And that's just going to be required and no matter what we do, if you don't have that draw, they're not coming. It's not going to be Wal-Mart that does that on a regular basis. So those are the comments I have, thank you very much for your presentation today.

Moved by Member Greco and seconded by Member Lynch:

ROLL CALL VOTE ON THE TOWN CENTER AREA STUDY DRAFT APPROVAL MOTION MADE BY MEMBER GRECO AND SECONDED BY MEMBER LYNCH:

Motion to approve the draft Town Center Area Study taking into account the comments and suggestions of the Planning Commission, in particular the suggestion that high-rise residential be

considered at the northeast corner of Eleven Mile Road and Town Center Drive. *Motion carried 6-0.*

2. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 11, 2013 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Moved by Member Lynch and seconded by Member Greco:

VOICE VOTE ON PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES APPROVAL MOTION MADE BY MEMBER LYNCH AND SECONDED BY MEMBER GRECO:

Motion to approve the December 28, 2013 Planning Commission Minutes. *Motion carried 6-0.*

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS FOR COMMISSION ACTION

There were no Consent Agenda Removals.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

There were no Matters for Discussion.

SUPPLEMENTAL ISSUES

There were no Supplemental Issues.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

No one in the audience wished to speak.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Member Lynch and seconded by Member Baratta:

VOICE VOTE ON MOTION TO ADJOURN MADE BY MEMBER LYNCH AND SECONDED BY MEMBER BARATTA:

Motion to adjourn the January 29, 2014 Planning Commission meeting. *Motion carried 6-0.*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 PM.

Transcribed by Valentina Nuculaj
February, 2014
Date Approved:

Richelle Leskun, Planning Assistant
Signature on File