



**MASTER PLAN & ZONING COMMITTEE**  
**City of Novi Planning Commission**  
**March 5, 2009 at 7:00 PM**  
**Novi Civic Center – Mayor’s Conference Room**  
**45175 W. Ten Mile, Novi, MI 48375**  
**(248) 347-0475**

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Members Victor Cassis, Andy Gutman and Michael Meyer

**Absent:** Member Michael Lynch (Excused)

**Also Present:** Barbara McBeth, Deputy Director of Community Development; Mark Spencer, Planner

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Moved by Member Meyer, seconded by Member Cassis:

**VOICE VOTE ON AGENDA APPROVAL MOTION MADE BY MEMBER MEYER AND SECONDED BY MEMBER CASSIS:**

**A motion to approve the Agenda. Motion carried 3-0.**

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Member Gutman opened the floor up for comment:

- Matt Quinn, Representing Weiss Properties: Encouraged the Master Plan and Zoning Committee to consider the B-2 Zoning classification for the Weiss property. The plan is assumed to come in with the Kroger store, and placing a B-1 Zoning on the site will doom it to failure. B-2 allows restaurants but not drive-throughs. This Applicant will agree to prohibit gas stations in their PRO. The B-2 uses are more compatible with the Applicant’s plan. Mr. Quinn said the Master Plan and Zoning Committee should even consider B-3 because there are no drive-throughs in the area. He said that the McDonald’s previously proposed on the west side of Novi Road was rejected because of the concern that the racing traffic would keep the nursing home residents awake. A drive-through on the subject property would not be near any residential and would not be a burden.

There was no Correspondence to share.

**MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

**1. Master Plan for Land Use Review**

***General Information***

Planner Spencer reviewed his Commercial Land Use Facts report: The retail facts have been collected. There are 1,031 acres zoned for commercial uses in Novi. This is 5% of the 20,000 acres in the City. The County average is 2.8%. The SEMCOG region average is 2.0%. This data indicate that Novi does serve a regional market. Commercial centers represent about 85% of the retail uses. There are about 5.5 million square feet of retail in the City; this will increase to about 6 million square feet with the projects that are planned.

The report contains a table that defines the different types of retail centers:

- Convenience, local business centers (20,000-100,000 square feet, typically with a supermarket, requiring a population of 5,000-10,000 people). 16.5% of the retail centers house local retail.
- Minor comparison or community business centers, intermediate comparison or community business centers (serves the City as a whole and perhaps cities twice Novi’s size, ranges from 100,000 to

400,000 square feet and requires 20,000-100,000 population), 27% of Novi retail is community business.

- Major comparison regional business centers (400,000+ square feet, serving populations of 250,000+). 56% of the Novi centers are regional. This includes Twelve Oaks, West Oaks 1 and 2, Twelve Mile Crossing and Novi Town Center.

Mr. Spencer has been compiling a vacancy report on the retail centers, and 60% have responded; The other centers were added to the report using a windshield survey – and many of these were 100% occupied. There is about a 9.6% retail vacancy rate in Novi. Local centers are at about 18% vacant; regional centers are at about 9.6%, but if one struggling center is removed from the equation, the percentage is about 4%. The national average is around 8% and the southeast Michigan average is about 12%. Novi's retail market is generally healthier than the region as a whole. The Michigan vacancy rates are rising in this economy.

Responding to the question posed by the Committee, Rock Financial Showplace Blair Bowman said that their business is doing well.

The Committee discussed the number of applicants that have sought site plan extensions and are delaying their construction. The need for more office/industrial space is market driven, so without a tenant signed, the Applicant is very likely to extend their approvals rather than build. Not much speculative building is going on, though Amson Dembs has two buildings in for review at this time. They will build them eventually. Some retail building is still going on, because certain retail is necessary regardless of the economy.

The Committee discussed how the Master Plan looks into the future, and therefore their review must be done in that light. Member Cassis added that the student count is down in the Novi school system.

#### ***Retail Demand Forecast (with Dwelling Unit Forecast)***

Planner Mark Spencer reviewed his report and said that planning for future retail is an important element of all Future Land Use plans. Without adequate space the public is not accommodated, and they will need to travel outside of the community to get these services. If the supply of retail is too large, a disinvestment in the current retail centers could occur. Keeping the supply in balance can help stimulate infill, reduce vacancy rates and sprawl.

The government's role is to provide areas in the municipality for a mix of economic uses and to make sure that those uses are compatible with the built and natural environments. Last year the Chesapeake Group did a market analysis of the community. They found that at this time the market is being satisfied. With this year's review, Novi's and the nation's residential growth were reviewed alongside the retail information. Mr. Spencer provided a trending report for the Committee to review.

Between 1990 and 2005, Novi averaged 630 new dwelling units per year. In 2008 it was 215, which includes an 81-unit Fox Run building. Chesapeake used the assumption that 400 new units would be built each year, equaling another 4,800 units by 2015. Historically however, nationwide when there is a steep drop in dwelling units there is a slower rebound than what Chesapeake assumed. Mr. Spencer also used some University of Michigan information as well as some unemployment forecasts. Using an optimistic number of 190 new units per year (a 16% drop from the 2008 numbers), Mr. Spencer created a ten-year forecast showing 2,600 to 3,700 new dwelling units for Novi. With this information, Mr. Spencer was able to forecast a retail square footage that could benefit the community. Mr. Spencer said that he was semi-optimistic in his forecasting because Novi is a thriving city.

Mr. Spencer described some of the assumptions that he made, such as counting additional assisted living units as less than "one" since assisted living citizens don't impact the community like active citizens do. He used planned- but not built-projects into this forecasts, which indicated that the City will need between 160,000-432,000 retail square feet in the future. He used 6,000 square feet of retail necessary for every acre of Novi land; realistically the City's average is about 9,000 square feet per acre. For the land already planned for retail uses, Mr. Spencer's numbers indicated a surplus capacity of land for 300,000 square feet with the low forecast, and 36,000 square feet with the higher forecast, through the year 2018.

Mr. Spencer explained that the build-out numbers used by the City are based on the current zoning of the properties, and densities are based on the Master Plan designations. For mixed use districts, Mr. Spencer allocated one-third of the land as Multiple Family Residential and each unit would be considered as ten dwelling units per acre. Mr. Spencer determined that the City will accommodate about another 5,800 dwelling units before reaching build-out. This is about 2,000 more units than his high-end forecast for 2018. Through his calculations, Mr. Spencer suggested that the City may need about 67 more acres of retail by build-out. This could change if the City increases its density. Mr. Spencer noted that the foreclosure rate in Novi is lower than the County foreclosure rate.

There may be some interest in adding senior living, though several proposals of this nature have been proposed in Novi over the years but have not all materialized. There may be some new interest generating in this industry, especially if any stimulus dollars are earmarked for this use. Mr. Spencer said that the Committee will also be provided with reviews of the industrial and office numbers.

The Committee discussed how the Novi residential assessments have held their own, comparatively. This bodes well for people interested in moving to Novi. This community has designed its growth with sustainability in mind.

### ***Special Planning Project Area 1 Land Use Review***

The Committee and staff discussed the report prepared by Planner Kristen Kapelanski. The area reviewed also included the Wisne property on the east side of the tracks, at that property owner's request. The report detailed the Special Planning Project area's Master Plan designations. From 1980 to 1993 it was master planned for Office and Light Industrial. In 1999 a Commercial designation was applied to the northern piece. In 2001, after the Novi Road Corridor Study, this area was designated as a Special Planning Project Area, as it was again in 2004. The neighboring properties are Multiple Family Residential (south and east), Public Facilities (ice rink), Single Family Residential, Public Facilities, Heavy and Light Industrial and Community Commercial (north) and Office (across Novi Road).

The City has received a petition on a portion of this study area for a 140,000 square-foot development with Commercial and Office elements. The petition does not impact all of the environmental features of the land, but the woodlands would be affected in some manner. There is a flood plain on the site as well. The petitioner did provide a Traffic Study in 2004, although that plan had about 20,000 more square feet of retail than the current petition.

The report provides details on the existing uses in the area, and is meant to provoke the Committee into considering what uses are compatible and where the designation lines should be drawn. Three alternatives were provided on pages 5, 6 and 7. The Office and Light Industrial combination would complement the Future Land Uses proposed on the northern side of Ten Mile and the western side of Novi Road. If the properties were master planned for Multiple Family Residential, the compatibility issues would be the railroad track, Industrial to the north and the potential for the Sports Club to become an Industrial use again. Traffic and environmental reviews will be provided in the future, ideally for the next meeting. Mr. Spencer noted that the level of service at the Ten Mile and Novi Road intersection has improved since the improvements have been made.

Mr. Spencer brought attention to the railroad information that was provided in the report. Standards from the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railroads recommend certain setbacks, vibration isolation features, lease provisions that warn nearby property buyers of the issues relating to railroads, Mr. Spencer suggested that perhaps the Committee may wish to give some consideration to this railroad feature.

Mr. Spencer said the Committee needs to determine what this intersection should look like, and whether the look is more important than the actual use. Is there a vision that the Committee wants to see at this intersection? Should buildings have a residential character? Should they be close to the street or set back from the street? Should there be parks? All of these considerations reiterate the "heart" of the planning process. The different classifications each have their own issues: Is there space for retail? How compatible would residential be? Is there enough demand for offices in this area?

Mr. Spencer said that the Planned Rezoning Overlay allows for flexibility when working with the different elements of each district. The option might allow for a proposal to work in concert with the environmental issues - with the end result of highlighting these desirable features.

The Wisne property owners are considering developing their site for Multiple Family Residential, despite its proximity to the railroad tracks. Mr. Spencer said that the setback from the property line near the railroad would be 75 feet for Multiple Family Residential. B-2 would be 30 feet, OS-1 would be 15 feet, and I-1 would be 20 feet. The Committee discussed the possibility of self-storage, which would be a Special Land Use adjacent to residential uses. The Committee thought it would be beneficial to have the Wisne representative come to an upcoming meeting. The Committee wondered what the neighboring vacancy rate is at the Multiple Family Residential site, and what other Multiple Family Residential sites were available in the City. Mr. Spencer said that the City has previously considered against adding more Multiple Family Residential sites to the community, though there is a possibility for it in the mixed use districts.

One of the City Council's goals is to be a community that maintains and protects its environmental features. The Committee discussed the value of considering the environmental features of this site.

Member Meyer asked Mr. Quinn to consider providing an historical plaque commemorating the Weiss property as the Erwin Orchard, with whatever plan is finally built on this site.

For the upcoming meeting:

- The Wisne representative will be asked to attend.
- The Committee will consider the various designations that could be placed on this study area. They were asked to e-mail Mark Spencer with any of their thoughts, comments or suggestions.

#### ***Sections 1, 2, 11 & 12 potential studies/changes***

Mr. Spencer showed the Master Plan designations on these four sections. Most of the developable property in Section 1 is Northern Equities property – Haggerty Corridor Corporate Park Phase 2, which is zoned OST. Northern Equities is proposing a text amendment that would allow minimal retail (restaurants) in this district to service the office buildings. West of the freeway includes a single property zoned for Office. The OST district is somewhat of a form-based district because it does allow research, development and associated industrial. The Committee discussed whether there should be a type of hybrid district that provides more flexibility.

Mr. Blair Bowman was in attendance at the meeting. He explained the developer's point of view, namely that when a company chooses to locate within a complex it is a strong investment on their part. Within reason, what goes on inside the walls is sometimes artificially constrained by the Ordinance. As long as the developer observes the development-, material- and landscape-standards to preserve the look of the area, the businesses should be able to make their own choices as to how their business runs internally. The intention of the IRO (Industrial-Research-Office) designation in Farmington Hills, an Ordinance Mr. Bowman's father helped design, was to provide this type of flexibility.

Mr. Spencer responded that the flexibility must still provide for certain planning principles, such as adjacency to residential. Techniques such as adequate landscape buffering could be used to make this flexibility fit. He added that if the Committee wanted to make such an overhaul of the Master Plan the Staff could provide them with the information to do so, though he was not advocating it. Ms. McBeth added that perhaps it is the Zoning Ordinance that should identify and provide for the new trends and technologies in the market. Member Cassis recommended that Rochester Hills be researched to determine how they prepared for a large battery operation he thought was locating in that community.

Mr. Spencer wondered whether an Office designation on the Master Plan might deter an industrial use, even though the actual zoning is OST, a zoning which might actually accommodate their use. Mr. Bowman encouraged the City to be prepared with the answers for emerging technology companies seeking to locate in zoning districts that on the surface may not look appropriate but in fact may be. He

understood that the City was looking at these new enterprise zone operations. Mr. Spencer said perhaps the City might consider a new designation named Technology, for example.

Mr. Spencer continued discussing the area on the other side of the freeway in Section 1. There is a 3.8 acre parcel owned by the Robert Rich Trust. This land is master planned for Office and is sized to accommodate a neighborhood service/office building. The current zoning is RA. Down the street is a parcel of land that was previously proposed for a development called Audubon Ridge, but the request has since expired. Other developable property in this area would be on the Brightmoor Church site, if they were ever to consider such an option. In Section 2 there is a small property on Novi Road that has been reviewed for a seven-unit attached residential complex called Brockdale Estates, but the plan has never been approved. The Committee discussed that these two sections are pretty well developed, and in light of the remaining developable sites' small sizes, these properties could be addressed as proposals are received without causing much planning difficulty.

Mr. Spencer said that Section 11 includes a portion of the Sandstone Consent Judgment that provides for Commercial uses. There are also some smaller parcels master planned for Office along Twelve Mile.

Mr. Spencer said that properties along Meadowbrook in Section 12 are master planned for Residential. The City has not heard of any interest in developing these sites, save the corner, on which the City occasionally fields questions. The Committee acknowledged that the area has been considered sensitive and the Residential zoning has been protected over the years.

Mr. Spencer concluded that everything except for the land east of the freeway is sound. The Committee will further discuss the Office designation for the easterly land.

For the upcoming meeting:

- The Committee was asked to e-mail Mark Spencer with any of their thoughts, comments or suggestions regarding the Office designation east of the freeway.

Mr. Spencer asked for the consensus of the Committee regarding the study areas from the 2008 Master Plan update. Did they wish to readdress these areas? The Committee felt that they had successfully completed the reviews on these areas (southwest quadrant, Napier-Wixom-Twelve Mile, and Novi Road corridor). Mr. Spencer told the Committee that when those sections are reviewed, the 2008 study areas would not be included.

#### **SCHEDULE/FUTURE AGENDA**

The next meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2009. Future agendas will list the proposed Master Plan and Zoning Committee dates for the year.

#### **ADJOURN**

Moved by Member Meyer, seconded by Member Cassis:

#### **VOICE VOTE ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION MADE BY MEMBER MEYER AND SECONDED BY MEMBER CASSIS:**

***A motion to adjourn. Motion carried 3-0.***

The meeting adjourned at or about 9:00 PM.

Transcribed by Jane L. Schimpf  
Customer Service Representative  
March 19, 2009  
Date Approved: