

# CITY OF PORTAGE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, August 17, 2023  
7:00 PM Portage  
Portage City Hall Council Chamber

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of August 17, 2023, was called to order by Chair Corradini at 7:00 p.m.

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

- Peter J. Dame, Chief Development Officer
- Catherine Kaufman, City Attorney
- Eric Feldt, Senior City Planner
- Biqi Zhao, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning

## **ROLL CALL**

Mr. Feldt called the roll: Chairman Corradini (yes); Vice Chair Baldwin (yes); Adams (no); Pezzoli (yes); Joshi (yes); Fries (yes); Youngs (yes); Freiman (yes); and Kasper (yes).

Motion by Vice Chair Baldwin, seconded by Commissioner Fries to excuse Commissioner Adams. Motion carried 8-0.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. Minutes dated August 3, 2023.

Motion by Commissioner Youngs, seconded by Commissioner Pezzoli to approve the August 3, 2023, meeting minutes, as submitted. Motion carried 8-0.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

1. A Rezoning and Tentative Plan Application (#23/24-1), from I-1 Light Industrial District to PD Planned Development District for a proposed residential development at 9581 Oakland Drive.

Mr. Feldt provided a PowerPoint presentation indicating the reasons the applicant filed the proposed rezoning and tentative plan, stated applicable zoning codes, explained the overall rezoning and Planned Development process, presented the applicant's site plan and project renderings, explained staff's analysis of various project details, showed pictures of the neighborhood and site, and indicated that the project was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and zoning code. Mr. Feldt stated that two public comment emails expressing the perceived concerns about traffic, privacy and noise, light pollution, and access were received and included for the Commission. Mr. Feldt concluded his presentation by stating if no additional public comment is requested by and the Commission is supportive of the proposed Rezoning and Tentative Plan request, staff recommends the Planning Commission to City Council the approval of the Rezoning and Tentative Plan Application #23/24-1, from I-1 Light Industrial to PD Planned Development for Oakland Commons residential development at 9581 Oakland Drive.

Chair Corradini asked the Commission for any questions to staff.

Various Commissioners discussed and asked about the following items: resulting traffic, impacts to Oakland Drive, location of the proposed driveway, the project's required left-turn lane and impact to existing driveways nearby, rental demand in Portage, the existing nearby storm water impact on the project's proposed storm water basins, the connections of the wetlands in the area, possible industrial user, and impacts to shrinking the overall industrial districts with the proposed rezone.

Mr. Feldt indicated the following to the Commissions comments and questions: Oakland Drive can accommodate future traffic trips from the project. The left-hand turn lane is required for the project to ensure proper traffic flow and traffic safety measures. Mr. Feldt stated that he would research and discuss with the City's Transportation & Utilities about how the left-hand turn lane would impact existing driveways, storm water impact, and wetland impact in the area. Also, Mr. Feldt stated that he would research the rental demand in Portage. He stated that in the past two years, staff has not receive any filed permits nor inquiries of an industrial project proposed on the subject parcel. Lastly, he indicated that the rezone would not reduce the overall more-appropriately situated industrial-zoned parcels within Portage because the subject parcel's industrial district designation is not the best fit due to close proximity to single-family housing, access along a residential collector street, past lot split away from Shaver Road, and possible negative impacts from a future industrial user.

Chair Corradini asked for the applicant to present the project.

Applicant, Mike West, Green Development Ventures and Allen Edwin Homes, 2186 E. Centre Avenue, Portage, MI. Mr. West introduced company staff members Brian Farkas, Director of Workforce Housing, and John Lovely, Project Manager. Mr. West presented the project and explained background of the layout, house size, garage style, and rental occupancy. He stated the possibility of seeking a Payment In-Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to establish 20% of housing to be workforce housing units associated with specific area median income levels. He mentioned the proposed buffering along the east, south, and western areas from Oakland Drive and adjacent commercial areas. Mr. West explained the proposed sidewalk and trails throughout the project. He stated the need and location of the emergency access drive connecting to Weathervane Self Storage to the east. He described the area and location of the wetlands and how the proposed trails lead to a viewing platform nearby. Mr. West explained the history and zoning of the development nearby and along Shaver Road, as well as development along Oakland Drive. He explained how he believes the property is better suited and more compatible with nearby residences for future residential development instead of the allowed industrial development as permitted in the underlying zoning district. And he indicated that the City Comprehensive Plan categorized Oakland Drive as a Residential Conservation Corridor. He addressed some of the Commissioners concerns by describing the natural buffer along Oakland Drive, the location of driveways across Oakland Drive, describing the length of the proposed left-hand turn lane, and indicated that there is a very low inventory of rental housing in the Portage area. He stated that single family detached homes rental is currently in high demand in the area. Further, he described the project's stormwater systems. He also explained the wetland system in the area. Lastly, he indicated that his engineer, Pat Flanagan, will prepare detailed drawing, calculations during the Final PD Step in the overall permitting process of this project.

Chair Corradini asked the Commission for any questions to the applicant.

Various Commissioners brought up the following concerns, questions: if the rental units could become available for purchase; if traffic resulting from project would burden Oakland Drive; if there are advantages to having detached garages vs. attached; phasing of the development; which units would be dedicated as workforce housing and how long they would be held at that price; if there would be sufficient parking for the 3- to 4-bedroom homes having only a single-car garage, if the proposal initially consisted of a site condo or plat instead of a single property with all rental units, if the side separation distance between homes accommodates exterior air compressor units, and how the property will be managed.

Mr. West responded to each of the Commissioners concerns, summarizes as the following: the overall rental management would likely establish the units in a way that they might be able to become for sale in the future, but the current proposal remains as rental units; traffic is expected to be lower than permitted industrial users; the narrowness of the homes' sites may led to a detached garage for the detached single-family homes; the project would be developed in one phase; the company has not yet determined which housing units would be dedicated as workforce housing but indicated that the workforce unit pricing would be held to for an 80% - 120% area median income-earner occupant for up to 15 years; there is additional guest parking for the project for those with additional cars, and that the market would result in an occupant's preference not seeking the single-car garage if they have high parking needs; the property size and other housing occupancy project lent this project to be operated as all rental units; all units will have air conditioning with exterior-located air compressors that will be accommodated either in the side or rear yards of each unit; and the property would be managed by a Coppery Bay, rental management company, owned by Allan Edwin Homes.

Chair Corradini opened Public Hearing.

1. Arnold Mackey, 9636 Oakland Drive, stated opposition to the project due to perceived concerns with traffic congestion, possible property tax increases, possible negative impacts to the environment and nature, and indicated a preference for the land to remain undeveloped.
2. Becky Argue, 9708 Oakland Drive, stated support of the project versus an industrial use, opposition to the project due to possible traffic congestion, and indicated the developer to keep a buffer along Oakland Drive to lessen light pollution and noise levels.
3. Taylor Brown, 9626 Oakland Drive, stated support of the project versus an industrial use, opposition to the project due to perceived headlight glare, and support of a buffer along Oakland Drive to lessen light pollution.

Chair Corradini asked for a motion to close Public Hearing. Motion by Commission Fries, seconded by Commissioner Pezzoli, to close Public Hearing. Motion carried 8-0.

Motion by Commissioner Pezzoli, seconded by Commissioner Fries to recommend the Planning Commission to City Council the approval of the Rezoning and Tentative Plan Application #23/24-1, from I-1 Light Industrial to PD Planned Development for Oakland Commons residential development at 9581 Oakland Drive. Motion carried 8-0.

## **SITE/FINAL PLANS**

None.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### 1. FY 2022-23 Planning Commission Work Program and Proposed FY2023-24 Planning Commission Work Program.

Mr. Feldt indicated that the Commission did not seem finished with this topic during the last meeting and that a motion and vote is needed for this item.

Chair Corradini opened the topic for general Commission discussion. He asked each Commissioner which City board he/ she would be interested in attending to bring back any land use related item for discussion at a future Planning Commission meeting.

Commissioner Youngs stated that he watches the Council meetings on TV and can catch the Zoning Board of Appeals meetings to keep involved in the community.

Commissioner Pezzoli stated support of attending other City boards/ commissions and haven't thought of which one(s) to attend yet.

Commissioner Fries stated interest in Council and zoning, changes in ordinances, and change in misconceptions of the public. He also stated that Portage needs to stay progressive in attracting young people, such examples are reducing lot and home sizes. He further indicated support of future training for Commissioners. Lastly, he supports learning and using the Michigan Association of Planning Zoning Toolkit.

Vice Chair Baldwin stated her support for attending other City boards/ commissions and especially the Council. She further provided support for training and workshops, specifically mentioned the Michigan Association of Planning Zoning Toolkit.

Commissioner Freiman stated his interest in environmental area and Parks and Recreation.

Commissioner Joshi stated her interest in attending other City boards/ commissioners within her schedule and learning about their issues. She further supported training budget for the Commissioners.

Commissioner Kasper stated her support in human services board and making Portage a great place to live for all.

Chair Corradini stated his support of the Youth Advisory Commission and their views for the community. He supports going to trainings and workshops but understands the difficulty with people's work and life schedules. However, he indicates that those who can attend to bring those training points back to the Commission during a scheduled Planning Commission meeting for a workshop and share, discuss with other Commissioners. He indicated that he would connect with Commissioner Adams to learn about his interest in attending any Commissions/ Boards.

Chair Corradini also asked Mr. Feldt if staff is still expecting the Planning Commission to have a Master Plan subcommittee for the new Master Plan update process. Vice Chair Baldwin support this idea. Ms. Zhao updated the Commission of the Master Plan updating process and informed the Commission that the Planning Commission can have a subcommittee for each chapter within the Master Plan update.

Commissioner Youngs asked the Commission if there is any interest in getting feedback from developers to assist in zoning code changes. Mr. Feldt indicated that the City did get developer feedbacks for the Master Plan updating process, and could have additional feedback on zoning code changes.

Motion by Commissioner Kasper, seconded by Commissioner Pezzoli to approve FY 2022-23 Planning Commission Work Program and Proposed FY2023-24 Planning Commission Work Program. Motion carried 8-0.

### **STATEMENT OF CITIZENS**

None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONERS/ STAFF**

Mr. Feldt stated that the next scheduled Planning Commission meeting on Thursday, September 7, 2023, may be cancelled and would inform the Commission about any cancellation.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Corradini adjourned the meeting at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Eric Feldt, AICP, CFM  
Senior City Planner