

**CITY OF AUBURN HILLS  
JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION / TAX INCREMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY MEETING**

**August 17, 2006**

**CALL TO ORDER:** TIFA Chairperson Bennett and Planning Commission Chairperson Hurt-Mendyka called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**TIFA ROLL CALL:** Present Bennett, Chilkott, Cople, Creager, Goodhall, Landsberg, Thornton  
Absent: None

**PC ROLL CALL:** Present. Beidoun, Doyle, Hurt-Mendyka, Ouellette, Pierce, Verbeke  
Absent: Patterson, Hammond, Hitchcock

Also Present. City Manager Culpepper, Assistant City Manager Tanghe, City Planner Cohen, Mayor Pro-Tem Pillsbury

Guests. Mr. Cople

**LOCATION:** Seyburn Room at the Community Center, 1827 N. Squirrel Road, Auburn Hills, MI 48326

**PERSON WISHING TO BE HEARD** – None

**PRESENTATION – Opdyke Road Streetscape Improvement Project**

City Manager Culpepper opened the presentation and thanked everyone for attending.

Assistant City Manager Tanghe provided an overview of the project explaining that several internal meetings have been held with staff, consultants, and the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC). He introduced the city staff present and asked both board members to introduce themselves. Lastly, Mr. Tanghe introduced Dave Ries, Mark Hieber and Matt Bohde with Harley Ellis Devereaux, who proceeded to review the preliminary streetscape concept.

Mr. Hieber reviewed the following project goals:

- Visually enhance the corridor. Provide unity, order, rhythm, focal points, screening, and gateways. Trees can help meet this goal in a cost effective way, along with shrubs/perennial massing and lighting.
- Increase safety for both pedestrians and vehicles. Crosswalks, lighting, and infill pathways will help meet that goal.
- Generate economic activity and growth. A nice streetscape could make the area more attractive to high tech companies. Encourage entertainment districts to develop around the hotels.

Mr. Ries provided an overview of the existing conditions along the corridor:

- RCOC has no future plans to modify Opdyke Road in the project area.
- A 120 foot wide right-of-way exists along the majority of Opdyke Road. The width varies north of University Drive and narrows to 100 feet in some areas. There is not enough right-of-way to build a boulevard in the future. According to the RCOC, the traffic volumes for the road are currently at half the capacity of the road design.
- There is sparse landscaping in the R.O.W. and some steep slopes.
- Opdyke Road from Doris Road to Featherstone Road has open drainage ditches.
- Reviewed the “Design Tool Box” graphic which represents the costs for various streetscape treatments.

Mr. Hieber asked both Boards a series of questions. The following responses were recorded:

- What do you like about the road?
  - Width of road
  - Developments like A&S RV, Chase Bank and MEEMIC
  - Unique configuration of the University intersection.
  - Variety/mix of land uses

- What do you dislike about the road?
  - Walton too busy
  - Dead trees
  - Silverdome parking lot resembles a barren desert
- How can we improve the character of the road?
  - Keep it suburban
  - Increase amount and quality of lighting
  - Tie character to downtown (Auburn Hills Brand)
  - Add Trees
  - Use Cobblestone/brick
  - Use tower symbol, which was a windmill
  - Conflict between new and old development styles – Respect old

The Boards discussion yielded the following:

- Budget. \$1.25 million construction budget. All improvements will be at the expense of TIFA.
- Street Trees/Shrubs. Trees are the top priority in planning the landscape design; studies show trees help slow down traffic. The use of trees also helps camouflage utility poles.
  - The RCOC's standard for tree setback (for 45mph roads) is 12 feet, which is greater than the setback shown on the design concepts. Overhead power lines interfere with a setback of 12 feet. Further consideration will be given to this matter by RCOC.
  - Tree planting in the median has been discussed, but cost, right-of-way, and obtaining approval from the RCOC are issues.
  - With regard to landscape maintenance, the City is increasingly planting more perennials than annuals. Irrigated areas should be minimized, but is OK in pockets. ROW lawn mowing is the property owners' responsibility.
- Pathways. Some of the sidewalks/pathways are fragmented. To help with foot traffic, they need to be repaired and connected. Asphalt is more cost effective.
- Lighting. Lighting becomes an important safety issue if the city wants to promote foot traffic. Lighting should tie in with the Village Center lighting.
- Theme. We are known as a "tree city" and also our fieldstone logo; could use one of these as a theme for the Opdyke Corridor. The Boards were asked to make recommendations on a new name for the Opdyke Corridor.
- Road Improvements. There was discussion regarding "roundabouts" at the major intersections along the corridor. The prospects for future funding of roundabouts through the RCOC are small. The corridor does not score well, as compared with other roads/intersections, to get funding. Staff confirmed Walton improvements would be coordinated with this project.
- Driveway Consolidation. OHM has reviewed the corridor for possible driveway consolidation. Only three or four driveways are candidates for consolidation.
- Land Use Study. The Planning Commission recently completed a land use study for the corridor. Mr. Cohen provided a brief status report.
- Signs. The City would like to see ground mounted signs along Opdyke Road. The ordinance allows signs to be constructed equal to the height of the building. The Planning Commission plans to review the sign ordinance in the near future.
- Road Speed Limit. The 45 mile per hour speed limit is set by the State Police. To petition for a speed limit change would be very challenging.
- Banners. Using banners on poles also help with the aesthetics. Intersection banners, which provide vertical scale elements with color and motion, were liked by some and not liked by others. There would be a maintenance factor with seasonal changes of the banners. When combined with light poles, cost is minimal. The pros and cons of banners were discussed with no resolution.
- Amenities. It was suggested that the city provide site furnishings such as benches and trash cans, in addition to trees, shrubs, lights, and banners.

The following streetscape design approaches were discussed:

- Design Approach "A" - Would disperse streetscape improvements uniformly over as much of the Opdyke corridor as the budget would allow, with the exception of the section between Featherstone and Doris where open drainage occurs. Future phases could include intersection improvements.
- Design Approach "B" - Would focus streetscape improvements at the main intersections only, Featherstone, University and Walton, and fan out based on available funding. This could include a low wall or banners as a gateway element, along with other design elements.
- Design Approach "C" - A mixture of both A & B with University Drive being the gateway intersection.

***Although some preferred Design Approach "C", the consensus of both Boards was that the consultants should proceed with Design Approach "B" and present details at the next joint meeting. The group felt that Design Approach "B" would be the most effective use of the current budget.***

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 14, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. The meeting location has yet to be finalized.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.  
Jeanne Tyler, Clerk III