

February 23, 2017

Hon. Village President and Council Members  
Village of Lake Orion  
21 East Church Street  
Lake Orion, MI 48362

**Subject: 2016 Annual Planning Program Report and 2017 Work Plan**

Hon. Village President and Council Members:

The Planning Commission of the Village of Lake Orion met nine (9) times in 2016 and reviewed a number of applications and worked on ordinance amendments, as follows:

### 2016 ACTIVITIES

#### Site Plans / Change of Use

1. Anita's Kitchen Restaurant (45 W. Flint Street).
2. Mix-Use: Retail / Restaurant / Residential Building (120 S. Broadway Street).

#### Special Land Use Permits

1. Atwater Commons PUD: Outdoor Seating (305 S. Broadway).
2. Acoustic Music Café and Venue (20 Front Street).

#### Other Considerations

1. Lot Split. Horseshoe Club (185 S. Broadway).
2. Lot Split and Combination. Residential, lakefront property (300-320 Peninsular Avenue).

As a highly desirable community, the Village of Lake Orion experienced a number of new development projects, especially within the downtown area.

#### Ordinance Amendments

1. Wireless Communication Facilities. Amendment changes include additions and deletions to the definitions section and revisions to Article 13, General Provisions, Use Provisions to reflect recent Federal changes.
2. Waterfront Setback for Detached Accessory Structures. Amendment to permit, between the 25- and 10-foot waterfront setbacks, structures greater than eight (8) inches in height that have minimal impact on views, visibility and impervious surface. The text amendment seeks to afford residents the enjoyment of having pergolas, decks, gazebos, etc. within a portion of the waterfront setback. The amendment achieves two main goals: (1) protecting views and visibility of residents; and (2) affording residents the ability to have a greater outdoor living space. Further, installing a detached accessory structure within the waterfront setback is safeguarded with maximum square footage and height standards and opacity requirements.
3. Height Overlay District (discussion only). The Planning Commission has investigated several other downtowns with historic building character that have made an increase in height allowance similar to

the one under consideration in Lake Orion (permitting a fourth story). Trends for living preferences (walkable, mixed-use environments and loft-type interior spaces) and development costs for a 2-3 story building, when compared to 4-5 story building, presents an opportunity for Lake Orion to adjust its Zoning Ordinance to better accommodate walkable redevelopment through the incorporation of a Height Overlay District. The Planning Commission continues to work on a Village Height Overlay District.

4. Sign Ordinance. An update to the Sign Ordinance is underway which accomplishes the following:
  - a. Establishes a stronger foundation for sign regulations and limitations to protect the character of Lake Orion's districts;
  - b. Provides a solid, content-neutral basis for challenging legal signage claims;
  - c. Reworks the definitions section for content neutrality and clarifications;
  - d. Provides general standards for measure, illumination, construction and maintenance, legibility and design, to ensure signage longevity and aesthetic quality;
  - e. Identifies signs that are prohibited in all districts;
  - f. Introduces signage tables to clarify ordinance requirements and provide the Zoning Administrator, Administration, and general public with a quick tool for referencing standards;
  - g. Outlines processes for addressing abandoned, damaged, illegal and unsafe signs;
  - h. Outlines the permitting process for signage;
  - i. Establishes criteria for the Board of Zoning Appeals when evaluating sign variance requests; and
  - j. Addresses nonconforming signs and the regulations / process for treating them when requests for enlargement, repair, etc. are made.

### **Professional Training**

In addition, the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) held a Joint Training Seminar in September of 2016 designed to highlight the fundamental roles and responsibilities of the Boards, discuss the need and the importance of the Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan, reiterate the fundamentals of making sound planning and development decisions and highways ways in which both bodies can become more effective and efficient in decision making. Continual training ensures a culture of highest standards.

## **2017 WORK PLAN**

The Planning Commission looks forward to the 2017 planning year. Consistent with the Planning Commission's general discussion during 2016, economic development is the key focus for 2017 planning and zoning work. This work plan is also aligned with the Village's adopted *Mission, Vision, Values and Goals of 2016-2017*. Additionally, the Village must update its Master Plan, which is dated 2008. Upcoming projects for the Planning Commission may include:

### **Master Plan Update**

The last update to the Village's Master Plan was in 2008. The Village should begin a comprehensive update to the 2008 Master Plan for a number of reasons:

1. Fulfills 5 Year Statutory Requirements
2. Promotes Civic Involvement
3. Supports Zoning Credibility
4. Acts as a Vehicle for Sustainability Planning
5. Provides a Source of Revenue Projections
6. Provides a Source of Community Pride
7. Response to Current and Future Economic Developments and Incentives
8. Respect and Protect Historic Village Character

### **Technical Review of Zoning Ordinance**

Since the last review and update to the Zoning Ordinance in 2010, the Planning Commission and McKenna has over the years, identified a number of corrections and clarifications to be implemented through ordinance amendments as resources allow. We recommend a comprehensive and technical review of the Zoning Ordinance to streamline processes, clarify standards, and ensure that uses are flexible, current and allow applicants to successfully develop to a standard expected by Village leaders.

### **Downtown Parking Strategy**

As identified during several of the recent development projects within the downtown district of Lake Orion, and as a height increase is being considered, downtown parking is at a premium. A parking study and accompanying management strategy would be highly beneficial to the Village for many reasons. Such a study would determine current parking trends and provide an analysis of parking demand. A parking strategy would also identify specific opportunities for additional parking areas through the reuse and redesign of spaces, and would acts as a management plan, guiding Ordinance and policy changes so that businesses, residents, and visitors of the downtown can efficiently find and utilize parking. A downtown parking strategy would be a collaborative effort among the Village and Downtown Development Authority (DDA), resulting in sound policy decisions across the various entities operating in the Village. The parking strategy is also aligned with Objective 3.7 of the Village's adopted *Mission, Vision, Values and Goals of 2016-2017*, which is to explore options for expanding parking facilities and opportunities within the downtown area.

A proactive work program can help maintain a quality community, and we look forward to working with the Village Council as it actively seeks to preserve its economic base.

Respectfully submitted,

**Village of Lake Orion Planning Commission**

cc: Mr. Darwin McClary, Village Manager  
Mrs. Susan Galeczka, Village Clerk