



University of Michigan Research Projects Frequently Asked Questions

The City has prepared an FAQ document to address questions regarding the reports completed by the University of Michigan Urban Planning graduate students. If you have a question that is not addressed or would like to share a comment with the City, please contact City Manager Amy Sullivan at asullivan@hwmi.org or 248.581.2632.

Why did the U-M projects look at these three issues -- housing, aging in place and redevelopment opportunities?

As part of the upcoming Master Plan update, the City has been gathering data on issues that will be significant to our community as we plan for the future. Since 2007, the City has been preparing for evolving demographics, particularly a growing senior population, which spurred discussions on housing and city services to help residents age in place and remain living in Huntington Woods.

The City is undertaking a Redevelopment Ready Community (RRC) certification process that will potentially provide state assistance through grants and developer incentives for redevelopment of commercial sites. Obtaining RRC certification is a critical part of the City's strategy to diversify our tax base and improve the quality of life for residents. Working with U-M gave us additional opportunities to gather updated, relevant data and expand that with input from residents.

What will the City do with the project reports?

The reports are independent student graduate projects and provide valuable perspectives from residents as well as updated data. It is not the intent of the City to act on the recommendations in the reports but rather, to gain additional input from the community for the City's Master Plan update in the coming year.

What is happening with the Senior Housing project?

Since Huntington Woods consists of single-family residential homes (and one duplex), the City has been exploring the idea of additional housing options for seniors. The City has

conducted surveys and visioning sessions to get feedback from residents to identify possible solutions that could add alternative housing stock to the community for seniors as they age. Concerns for aging residents include accessibility issues in older homes, connection to community, less green space to maintain, and the cost of robust housing values with the accompanying taxes.

The City Commission held a special study session in May 2019 on housing for seniors to discuss whether housing could be "multi-generational" and not solely age-restricted. There is still a substantial amount of market research and community feedback needed; thus, the majority of the City Commission supported the idea of exploring the idea of multi-generational housing to ensure the City does not limit possible creative housing options for seniors. The City Commission has not made any decisions regarding adding alternative housing stock at any location within the City boundaries.

Given the state of the 2020 budget and the current volatile economy, why are we working on this study?

There was no cost to the City for the U-M study - other than the minor cost to promote the community-wide February engagement session. These reports are part of a larger upcoming Master Plan update. The Planning Enable Act requires that the Planning Commission review the Master Plan every five years. This comprehensive review is facilitated by a Planning Consultant, and the City has budgeted \$25,000 for the 2020-21 update.

Concurrently with the Master Plan update process, the City is undertaking the Redevelopment Ready Certification process to ensure the City implements the best management practices for development along our corridors. At this time, City staff is managing the certification process; we do not yet know if we will need to spend City resources to implement recommended best management practices not currently being utilized. Any expenditure of funds will be carefully weighed by the City Commission since the RRC process is an investment in the City's long-term development and fiscal health.

How is this study different from previous studies? It seems like we have conducted so many studies.

The U-M reports build on previous studies focused on housing and aging-in-place. The information gathered from residents was more granular, looking at preferences for housing styles, amenities, and price points. The U-M reports provide specific ideas to further community discussions and obtain additional feedback from residents. This will help us to better assess community preferences, which we plan to incorporate into the Master Plan.

What is the timeframe for future development?

The City is not committed to any timeframe for development. As we refine the vision during the Master Plan process, and the City achieves RRC certification, we will be better able to establish a timeline.

What was the City's role in these research reports?

Last fall, the City reached out to U-M to see if there was interest in conducting research projects that furthered our data collection efforts. We provided previous studies and data for background on the most pressing issues. Other than discussing the contours of the issues we wanted to examine, our role was minimal. City staff assisted the graduate students by facilitating community engagement efforts such as mailing focus group invitations and distributing and collecting surveys. This was not a city-driven project; rather these are independent student research projects, and the recommendations in the reports are solely a function of the students' findings.

One of the reports suggested rezoning property on 11 Mile. Are the houses on 11 Mile going to be rezoned?

No. One of the reports suggested that rezoning property on 11 Mile is a way to provide for alternative housing styles. The City is not considering rezoning. If this is a suggestion the community wants to explore in more detail, there would be lots of opportunity for public comment and discussion.

What can I do to express my perspective about these reports?

The Master Plan update is an opportunity to gather broader community input on the U-M reports. All residents will receive information on community engagement sessions for the Master Plan; everyone is invited to participate. In the meantime, please direct comments to the City Manager, who will share them with the appropriate stakeholders as the discussion evolves.

Did the City pay for these reports?

No. We were fortunate this opportunity was available to us at no cost to the City and wish to extend our thanks to U-M and the Urban Planning program for their efforts.