

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of August 5, 2020

**SUBJECT: Veridian at County Farm PUD Zoning and Supplemental Regulations
Project No. Z19-013
Veridian at County Farm North Site Plan (Avalon)
Project No. SP19-038
Veridian at County Farm South Site Plan (Thrive)
Project No. SP19-039
2270 Platt Road**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Veridian at County Farm PUD Zoning District and Supplemental Regulations.

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Veridian at County Farm North Site Plan (Avalon Housing) and Development Agreement, subject to land division approval prior to applying for any permits.

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Veridian at County Farm South Site Plan (Thrive Collaborative) and Development Agreement, subject to land division approval prior to applying for any permits.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the **Veridian at County Farm PUD Zoning District and Supplemental Regulations** be **approved** because the uses, physical characteristics, design features, and amenities proposed provide a beneficial effect for the City, could not be achieved under any other zoning classification, will not have a detrimental effect on public utilities or surrounding properties, provides adequate justification for deviating from the master plan future land use recommendation, provide sufficient analysis and justification in the supplemental regulations, and provides acceptable circulation.

Staff recommends that the **Veridian at County Farm North Site Plan** and **Veridian at County Farm South Site Plan** each be **approved** because the contemplated developments comply with all applicable state, local and federal law, ordinances, standards, and regulations; the developments limit disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land; the developments will not cause a public or private nuisance and will not have a detrimental effect on the public health, safety, or welfare; and the proposed uses are consistent with the proposed PUD Supplemental Regulations.

LOCATION:

This 12.8-acre site is located on the west side of Platt Road between Washtenaw Avenue and Huron Parkway. It is currently part of a larger Washtenaw County owned parcel and will be divided from that parent site upon zoning and site plan approval in accordance with a purchase and development agreement with Washtenaw County. Ward 3.

SUMMARY:

The proposed project includes three petitions.

- 1) Rezoning: A petition to rezone a 12.8-acre site from PL (Public Land) to PUD (Planned Unit Development) and Supplemental Regulations for a mixed-type residential development with community spaces, accessory retail, and advanced sustainable construction methods, including a significant percentage of affordable housing.
- 2) Site Plan (North): A site plan for a 50 affordable apartment homes in 9 three-story buildings on a 4.4-acre site.
- 3) Site Plan (South): A site plan for 99 homes including detached, attached, and apartments, and community buildings on an 8.4-acre site with advanced sustainability and efficiency.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Existing Conditions – A 12.8-acre site is part of the County Farm Park site. The subject site fronts Platt Road just north of Huron Parkway and was the location of a now-demolished juvenile detention facility and court facility. The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners first entered into a process to determine the preferred use of the site, and then issued a request for proposals to develop it for primarily residential use, including some affordable housing.

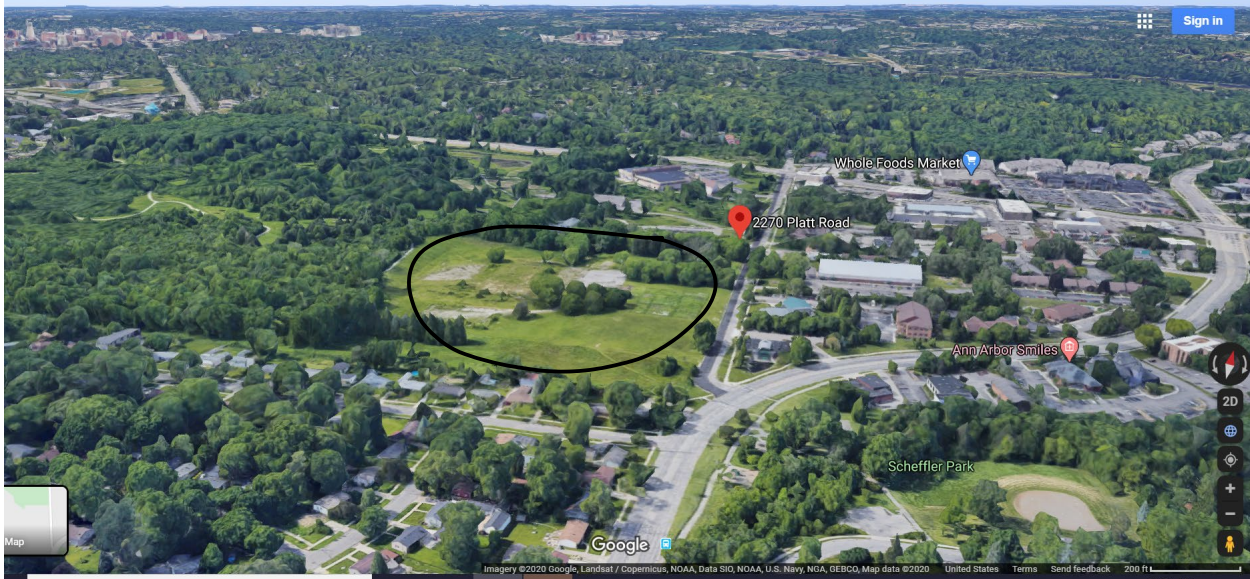


Figure 1 - Bird's Eye View 2270 Platt Road (2020 Imagery from Google)

The site is generally flat with a slight downward slope to the southeast. It is open except for some trees near the former buildings and parking lot, and old hedgerows.

PUD Zoning District and Supplemental Regulations – A joint petition to rezone the site from PL (Public Land) district to PUD (Planned Unit Development) has been submitted by the development team. Supplemental Regulations have been prepared (attached), as required, to establish the use, density, height, placement, off-street parking, landscaping, and other development regulations for the proposed PUD district.

These PUD Supplemental Regulations were written to enable the proposed development while requiring the features, amenities and community benefits that support and justify the PUD Zoning designation to be realized and maintained. There are three predominant benefits of the PUD zoning designation that justify the request (see PUD Development Program, attached): affordable housing, mixed-income residential development, and sustainable living. All 50 dwelling units on the north portion of the site will be affordable housing, approximately one-third of the total number of dwelling units in the PUD district. All of the approximately 99 dwelling units on the south portion of the site will be market rate units but in a variety of sizes and configurations ranging from detached houses to a micro-apartment building. This variety of housing on the south portion creates a unique mix of types and price points and, particularly when combined with the affordable housing on the north portion, provides a mixed-income residential neighborhood. The proposed supplemental regulations do require the UDC-specified 15% of affordable units on the south portion in the event that this component proceeds prior to or independent of the north portion.

The proposed PUD district seeks to be an environmentally sustainable development in the city by committing to all electric utilities, with no gas supply to the site and no gas-powered appliances, utilities or equipment. The South Site Plan (Thrive) is registered as a Living Community Challenge project (a rigorous and inspiring green-building standard) and has committed to developing renewable energy. The North Site Plan (Avalon) will achieve Enterprise Green Certification.

Community-oriented design is a key principle of development with the proposed PUD district. Buildings are arranged in a compact, clustered arrangement allowing for more public open spaces and green infrastructure. Usable front porches facing greenways, entrances facing drives and gathering spaces, open space greenways linking into County Farm Park, and a sense of neighborhood are design amenities proposed in the development and addressed in the PUD Supplemental Regulations.

The south portion has a local retail farm store, walkable to residents and neighbors. A restored barn will be relocated to the site for repurposing as a multi-functional community space.

The PUD Supplemental Regulations divide the district into two components, North and South. Some regulations are unique to each component, some are applicable to both components. A summary of the regulations is provided in the below.

Summary of Veridian at County Farm PUD Supplemental Regulations		
	North (Avalon) Component	South (Thrive) Component
Principal Uses	Residential Dwellings	
Accessory Uses	District: Community Center, Child Care Center, Office, Private School, Personal Scale Solar Energy, Solar Energy System South Only: Retail, Restaurant, Outdoor Sales, Personal Services	
Density	16 dwelling units per acre	
Floor Area	6,000 square feet accessory uses	24,000 square feet accessory uses
Setbacks	Minimum 10 feet from Platt Road Minimum 20 feet from North and West boundary Minimum 50 feet from South boundary Building spacing as required by Building Code	
Height	Maximum 45 feet	
Parking	Maximum 2 per dwelling unit Maximum 1 per 500 SF nonresidential uses Bicycle parking per Unified Development Code (Note, the petitioner has proposed minimums as well)	
Landscaping and Buffer	Conflicting Land Use Buffer added as requirement along West and North (not required by UDC); Enhanced Conflicting Land Use Buffer along South; At maturity, deciduous trees to shade 50% of vehicular use area surfaces	
Affordable Housing	All residential dwellings in North must be affordable housing per UDC (affordable to households at or below 60% area median income); 15% must be affordable housing in South in the event that North component not realized.	
Community Design	Community-oriented design principles of the Master Plan Land Use Element are required in the district	
Sustainability	North development must achieve Enterprise Green Certification South development must be registered as Living Community Challenge project	

North Site Plan – Avalon Housing, Inc. proposes a site plan for the northern 4.4-acre portion of the site. Consistent with the proposed PUD Supplemental Regulations, 50 affordable housing units will be constructed in nine 3-story buildings. Highlights of the site plan (layout, landscape and building plan sheets attached) include:

- Stacked flats and townhome housing units.
- Interconnected sidewalks, front porches, front doors facing streets and greenways.
- Community building located adjacent to South component.
- One of the two entrance drives to the development is located on the north site. A private main drive circulates through this portion of the development and continues through the south portion.
- Surface parking is provided for each dwelling unit. Additional spaces are located parallel to the main drive.
- A traditional conflicting land use buffer is provided along the north and west sides of the development.
- Storm water management is proposed in a pipe system underneath the parking areas.
- The development will provide one pedestrian activated crossing signal at Platt Road (for a total of two pedestrian crossings of Platt Road).

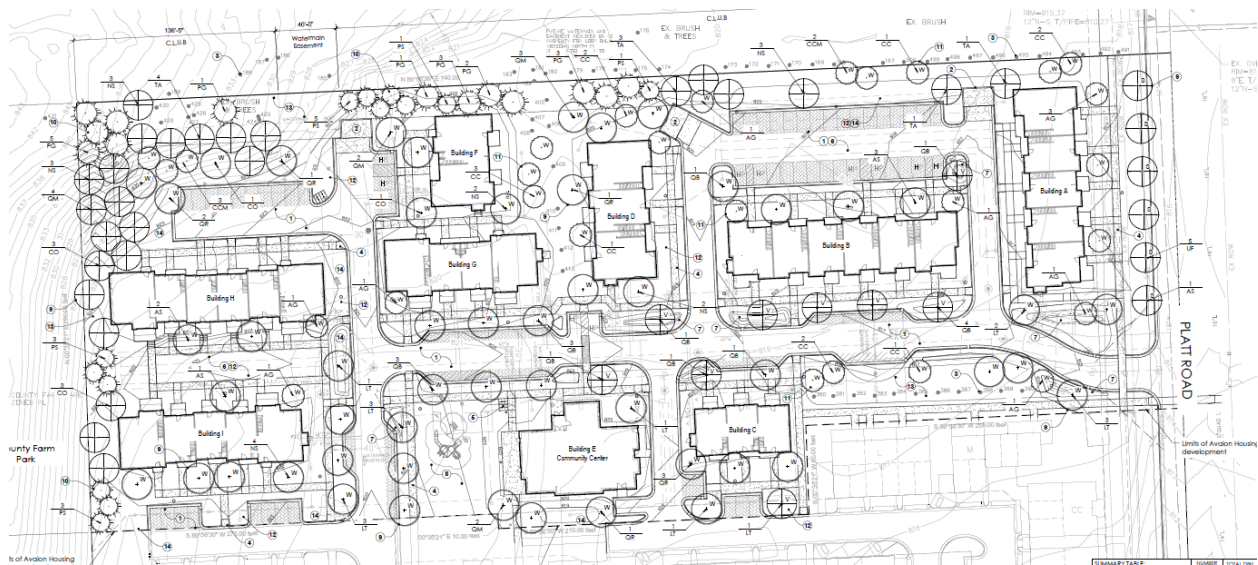


Figure 2 - North Site Plan (Avalon) with Landscape Notes

South Site Plan – Thrive Collaborative proposes a site plan for a variety of residential units and accessory retail use on the 8.4-acre south portion of the site. Highlights of the site plan (layout, landscape, and building plan sheets attached) include:

- 16 “Village” homes
- 42 Townhouse homes

- 30 Walk-up Flats
- 11 “Nest” micro-unit apartments
- Farmhouse building
- Barn
- Garden shed and bike shed
- Interconnected sidewalks including direct connection with path in County Farm Park, front porches, front doors facing streets and greenways.
- One of the two entrance drives is located on the south portion of the site. A private main drive circulates through this portion of the development and continues through the south portion.
- A storm water management system is proposed to infiltrate all stormwater into the ground through interconnected rain gardens and bioswales and a significant amount of pervious pavement. Storm water management is outside of the scope of the proposed PUD district and Supplemental Regulations but the system is demonstrative of the proposed PUD development’s commitment to sustainability.
- The development will provide one pedestrian activated crossing signal on Platt Road (for a total of two new crossings).



Figure 3 - South Site Plan (Thrive)

BACKGROUND:

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (BOC) formed a Community Advisory Committee in 2013 to help determine disposition of this portion of the County Farm Park. The BOC accepted the committee's recommendations in 2014 and then the committee continued to support planning and outreach. A multi-day community design process, in the form of a charrette, was held in 2014. The BOC adopted the Housing Affordability and Economic Equity report in 2015 as well as finalized the desired outcome when disposing the Platt Road site. A request for proposals was issued and six proposals were received in 2016. Three applicants were chosen to make presentations to the BOC. The Thrive Collaborative and Partners group was chosen by the BOC in August 2017 as the best qualified bidder to develop the site.

Thrive Collaborative and Avalon Housing submitted a joint PUD Zoning District petition and individual site plan applications on October 21, 2019.

MASTER PLAN REVIEW:

Eight documents constitute the elements of the City Master Plan:

1. Sustainability Framework (2013)
2. Land Use Element (2009)
3. Downtown Plan (2009)
4. Transportation Plan Update (2009)
5. Non-motorized Transportation Plan (2007) and Update (2013)
6. Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan (2016-2020)
7. Natural Features Master Plan (2004)
8. Treeline Allen Creek Urban Trail Master Plan (2018)

Together, the Master Plan elements seek to guide the City towards sustainability, conservation, and increasing livability, affordability, transportation choices, and denser, mixed uses on vibrant, active friendly streets. There is no specific future land use recommendation for this site in the Land Use Element as, generally speaking, this plan does not plan for publicly owned lands. However, Washtenaw County, the owner of the site, organized a community-driven design process to determine the desired use of the site when they dispose of it.

The design and principles developed and/or affirmed through the Platt Road charrette process included: integrating with the neighborhood, mixed-income development with affordable and moderately priced housing, nonresidential uses that would be accessory and supportive to the neighborhood, varied housing types and forms for all ages and stages, utilizing green technologies and sustainable design (storm water management, green energy, limiting use of impervious surface), reduced auto-dependency, embracing alternative transportation (walking, biking, transit), and promoting a pedestrian-oriented development patten.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:

Section 5.29.10 of the UDC provides for PUD zoning to obtain more flexibility in development than is provided by the standard zoning districts within certain limitations and meeting certain criteria.

Limitations of PUD zoning flexibility include increases, decreases or elimination of just three development standards: use regulations and area, height and placement regulations; off-street parking regulations; and landscaping, screening and buffering requirements. (Development standards for storm water management and soil erosion, natural features, and signs are not eligible for flexibility.)

The PUD process involves five steps as set forth in Section 5.29.10.C. Each step is listed below with staff commentary.

1. Citizen Participation – A citizen participation meeting was held on July 17, 2019 and attended by approximately 50 people. The applicant's report on this meeting is attached. In addition, although outside of the PUD process, the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development sponsored a three-day design charrette on August 26, 27 and 28, 2014 to craft a community-driven design and plan for the site. More information on the charrette can be found [here](#).
2. Pre-Application meetings with staff – were held as needed to prepare the required materials.
3. Pre-Application Conference with Planning Commission – The applicant team discussed the proposed project with the Planning Commission at its July 9, 2019 working session. An [overview](#) of the project and [renderings](#) were included in the meeting packet.
4. PUD Zoning District Review – This step involves determining consistency with, or the appropriateness of deviating from, the City's adopted plans and policies and the suitability of adopting the supplemental regulations as part of the zoning ordinance. Once reviewed by the Planning Commission and approved by City Council, the property is zoned to a PUD district and use and development of the property is regulated by the Supplemental Regulations and any other applicable code requirements.
5. PUD Site Plan Review – Site plan approval is required for issuance of any permits to development property. In the case of property in a PUD district, the standards for PUD Site Plan Review are similar to a standard site plan and include compliance with the adopted PUD Supplemental Regulations in addition to any other applicable code requirements. For the proposed project, steps 4 and 5 have been combined and are being handled simultaneously.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS:

As set forth in Section 5.29.10.F of the UDC, the Planning Commission may recommend approval and City Council may approve a PUD Zoning District and Supplemental Regulations based on the following standards:

1. The proposed district offers a beneficial effect, such as a) an innovative land use or variety in design; b) economy and efficiency of land use, natural resources, energy, services, or utilities; c) open space; d) preservation of natural features that exceeds minimum requirements; e) employment and shopping opportunities; f) affordable housing; g) use/reuse of existing sites and buildings.
2. The beneficial effect cannot be achieved under any other zoning classification and is not required by other codes or regulations.
3. The uses are not detrimental to public utilities or surrounding properties.
4. The proposed uses are consistent with the master plan or are a justifiable departure.
5. If applicable, residential densities must be consistent with the master plan or underlying zoning, but additional density is allowed in order to provide affordable housing.
6. The Supplemental Regulations contain certain required sections and information.
7. Transportation for all modes is safe, convenient, uncongested, and well-defined and alternative modes are encouraged and supported.
8. Any disturbance to natural features or significant architectural features is limited to the minimum necessary and the beneficial effects are greater than any negative impacts.

Staff Comments – The proposed PUD Zoning District meets all of the standards for approval.

Staff finds the proposed project provides several of the sample beneficial effects, notably “an innovation in land use and variety of design, layout and type of structures that furthers the stated design goals and physical character of the adopted land use plans and policies;” economy and efficiency of land, energy and utilities, affordable housing, and reuse of an existing site “that contributes to the desired character and form of an established neighborhood.”

The purpose of the proposed PUD is to develop the site in an innovative manner with a variety of housing types as a mixed-income neighborhood using emerging best practices for sustainable construction and sustainable living. This innovation, along with the dedication of affordable housing, are the most compelling reasons to approve the proposed PUD but its additional benefits are equally worthwhile and should not be discounted. The proposed development has sufficient density and proximity for public transit use; is near employment and retail centers; maintains a comparable scale and density to established residential neighborhood. Staff also note the proposed development is in keeping with the goals established through the community-driven design process created for this site and the basis of the Washtenaw County BOC’s winning bid award.

The proposed PUD development is certainly one that cannot be achieved by a standard zoning district and will not have a detrimental impact on either public utilities or surrounding properties. The proposed use is not consistent with the master plan land use recommendation for continued publicly owned land, but is consistent with all other elements of the master plan regarding sustainability, transportation, nonmotorized transportation, climate action, and housing affordability, and is consistent with the community-driven planning effort led by Washtenaw County for the future use of this land.

Affordable housing is a significant and integral part of the proposed PUD. The proposed Supplemental Regulations include analysis and justification sufficient to determine what the purported benefit is, how the special benefit will be provided, and performance standards by which the special benefit will be evaluated.

Safe, convenient, uncongested, and well-defined vehicular and pedestrian circulation is provided within and to the proposed PUD district and, further, the development encourages and supports alternative modes of transportation. Finally, disturbance to existing natural features has been kept to a minimum.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW TEAM COMMENTS:

Planning – Staff have analyzed the proposed PUD zoning and Supplemental Regulations, and have reviewed the proposed site plans, and found all to comply with the standards of approval. Other staff on the development review team have generally found the site plans comply with applicable development requirements, with the specific exceptions noted in this section:

The proposed project will further many of the goals expressed in the various Master Plan elements and the community-design driven principles identified for the site. Staff hope these developments will demonstrate and encourage other new projects to consider and incorporate the unique, innovative, and desirable characteristics of the PUD district into their standard district developments. Perhaps, as well, the Veridian at County Farm development will serve as a model for amending some development standards to make a mixed type, mixed income, sustainable community easier to realize.

Development agreements have been drafted for each site plan to address performance standards as well as construction coordination in addition to typical provisions.

Sustainability & Innovations – The proposed district and developments within it have numerous design elements identified as supporting the A2Zero Plan and its carbon neutrality goals. Staff's full analysis of the North Site Plan is [here](#) and the South Site Plan is [here](#).

Engineering – South Site Plan (Thrive) – Staff continue to work with the applicant's engineers and designers to refine the engineering plans to minimize overlap between the underground water and sanitary sewer mains and water and sanitary leads and the above ground bioswales and rain garden conveyance systems. The goal of this work is to limit the restoration work that may be necessary should any repairs or maintenance is needed in the future.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo
Reviewed by Brett Lenart
7-31-20

Attachments: A) Zoning Map
 B) PUD Development Program
 C) PUD Supplemental Regulations
 D) Resident Participation Meeting Report
 E) Overall Site Plan (Veridian at County Farm)

- F) North Site Plan Layout Sheet
- G) North Site Plan Landscape Sheets
- H) North Site Plan Building Sheets
- I) South Site Plan Layout Sheet
- J) South Site Plan Landscape Sheet
- K) South Site Plan Building Sheets
- L) Draft Development Agreement (Veridian at County Farm North)
- M) Draft Development Agreement (Veridian at County Farm South)

- c: Applicant (Thrive Collaborative, 6200 Second Ave, D102, Detroit, MI 48202, attn. Matthew Grocoff)
- Applicant (Avalon Housing, Inc., 1327 Jones Dr, Ste 102, Ann Arbor, MI 48105, attn. Wendy Carty-Saxon)
- Development Review Team
- Files