

**To:** Commerce Township Board of Trustees

**From:** Commerce Township Planning Department  
David Campbell, AICP – Planning Director  
Paula Lankford – Senior Planner

**Date:** March 5, 2025

**RE:** March 2025 Monthly Planning Department Report  
(covering February 4, 2025 through March 4, 2025)

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### Development updates

- **Dort Financial Credit Union** – Dort Financial Credit Union submitted a planned unit development (PUD) site plan application for a new 3,200 sq ft branch with drive-through to be located on Unit 1 within the Five & Main mixed-use development. Dort Financial’s site would be at the northwest corner of the soon-to-be-signalized four-approach intersection of Pontiac Trail, Walnut Lake Road, and the newly-christened Pinewood Avenue. When Commerce Township approved an amendment to the Five & Main PUD in 2023, we did so conditional upon the developer submitting design & signage guidelines that would apply to the entire development, so that when individual PUD site plans were submitted (such as the PUD site plan for Dort Financial), the plans could be reviewed to confirm consistency with those design & signage guidelines. Dort Financial’s PUD site plan was submitted without the Township receiving the guidelines from the Five & Main developer, which made it challenging for the Planning Commission to take action on Dort Financial’s PUD site plan during their meeting on March 3, 2025 (aka Paczki Eve). Compounding the challenge was the Planning Commission’s reasonable assumption that any decisions reached on Dort Financial’s PUD site plan would set a precedent for future PUD site plans within Five & Main, especially in the absence of the design & signage guidelines. An example of the challenge was signage – Dort Financial’s plan calls for three wall signs and a freestanding monument sign. In the absence of overall sign guidelines for Five & Main, the Planning Commission had no basis for considering the quantity, size/height, style, and illumination of Dort’s proposed signage, and had to assume that if Dort were permitted to have three wall signs and a freestanding sign, then every future building/tenant/user within Five & Main would expect three wall signs and a freestanding sign. Given these challenges, the Planning Commission at their March 3 meeting tabled any action on Dort Financial’s PUD site plan so that the Five & Main development team could create the design & signage guidelines, and for Dort Financial to adjust their proposed building to meet those guidelines.
- **Midtown on Haggerty PUD amendment (Kroger w/ fuel center)** – Schafer Development continues their efforts to amend the approved PUD for Midtown on Haggerty, effectively replacing the 187 apartments approved on the westerly two-thirds of the site with a 100,000 sq ft Kroger with fuel center. The existing Kroger (formerly Hiller’s) at the northwest corner of 14 Mile and Haggerty would be repurposed, with Kroger either selling or leasing the building/property. The amendment to Midtown on Haggerty’s PUD required a public hearing at the Planning Commission’s meeting on January 6, 2025. Much of the discussion amongst

the PC and the development team was the recognizable public benefits to be included with the PUD, given the deviations being sought by the developer relative to the property's underlying B-2 zoning. Deviations include a Kroger fuel center which is typically only permitted as a special land use in B-3, and the multiple drive-through's that have already been built and are operating within Midtown given that drive-through's would otherwise require special land use approval in B-2. The Planning Commission took no action on Midtown's PUD amendment on Jan. 6 in order to allow the development team additional time to refine & enhance their offer of recognizable public benefits. The Schafer Development team returned to the Planning Commission on February 3, but given that there remained many questions about the offer of recognizable public benefits, the developers asked again to be tabled prior to any Planning Commission action. Between the February 3 and March 3 meetings of the Planning Commission, much effort was made by all involved to refine the offer of public benefits. However, at the March 3 meeting, the Planning Commission made a formal recommendation that the Township Board deny the amendment to the Midtown on Haggerty PUD based on a finding that the totality of the recognizable public benefits offered by the developer were not proportionate to the deviations to the Zoning Ordinance being sought. Schafer Development informed the Planning Department on March 4 that they would like to continue to work on their offer of public benefits, and therefore do not want their project to proceed to the Township Board for the Board's final decision on March 11. The developer is aware that if they make substantive changes to their offer, those changes would likely have to go back to the Planning Commission for a new recommendation. The developer agrees they want to avoid the project proceeding to the Township Board without a recommendation to approve from the Planning Commission.

- **Townes at 42 North (Meijer outlot next to Goodwill)** – Schafer Development (yes, the same guys as above) also applied for approval of a condominium site plan and special land use to develop a for-sale two-story townhome product consisting of 39 two and three-bedroom units on a 5-acre outlot of Meijer on the north side of Crumb Road just east of Meijer Drive. The subject site is zoned B-3 (General Business) but is also in the Haggerty Road Corridor (HRC) overlay, which allows attached residential as a special land use. A public hearing was scheduled and held during the February 3<sup>rd</sup> Planning Commission meeting for the special land use. Subsequent to the public hearing, the special land use and the condominium site plan were approved by the Planning Commission, with the PC further recommending the Township Board approve the condominium's master deed. Townes at 42 North was reviewed by the Township Board and received final approval at the Board's February 11 meeting. It appears Schafer Development will now sell their approved project to M/I Homes, who will build it.
- **Commerce Lake Market** – Steve Bakko, owner of the Commerce Lake Market at 1740 Glengary continues to consider options for rebuilding/expanding his store, with the latest concept to include four fuel pumps (eight nozzles) under a canopy. The fuel pumps & canopy would be on the east side of Benstein Road, on property currently occupied by the home at 2750 Benstein which Mr. Bakko owns and currently rents. The house would be demolished and the property rezoned to be included as part of the project. Commerce Lake Market is an off-premises alcohol sales outlet (OPASO), but Mr. Bakko states his intent is not to expand the alcohol sales of the existing store but to instead use the expansion to offer more options

for prepared/hot foods, groceries, and non-alcoholic beverages. Mr. Bakko presented his latest concept plan to the Planning Commission during their meeting on March 3, 2025 and received their informal and non-binding comments which were mostly favorable. It should be noted that it was pretty late by the time Mr. Bakko and his team had their turn to present at the Planning Commission meeting, and the PC might have been favorable to just about anything if it meant they got to go home. Mr. Bakko contacted the Planning Department on March 4 to start the formal process of a conditional rezoning of his properties to B-3 (General Business), indicating he is eager to move his project forward.

### **Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)**

The ZBA's next regular meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2025. No petitions have been submitted, however the ZBA will be meeting to discuss a potential text amendment to Article 41 of the Zoning Ordinance. The amendment would address the ZBA's consideration of the six criteria contained within Sec. 41.09, and how those criteria are applied to dimensional variance petitions, with a particular focus on variances that are not "self-created" by the property owner but were instead created by prior owners and/or builders.

### **Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission's regular meeting scheduled for March 3, 2025 included the following (in no particular order):

- The PC removed from the table and made a recommendation that the Township Board deny the proposed amendment for the Midtown on Haggerty planned unit development located at 155 Haggerty Road (as described above)
- The PC tabled a PUD site plan for a proposed new Dort Financial Credit Union branch to be located on the northwest corner of Pontiac Trail and Pinewood Avenue on Unit 1 of Five & Main (as described above)
- The PC approved a resolution affirming their commitment to rock & roll all night and party every day
- The PC gave their informal and non-binding comments for a concept plan for an expansion of the Commerce Lake Market located at 1740 Glengary Road to include a new larger store with fuel pumps (as described above)

The Planning Commission's regular meeting scheduled for April 7, 2025 will potentially include the following (in no particular order):

- The potential removal from the table of the Dort Financial Credit Union for review of a new credit union branch on Unit 1 of Five & Main (as discussed a whole lot above)