



Retail

Sheetz stakes out Royal Oak-Birmingham border for its next location

By Jay Davis



Credit: Sheetz

Sheetz is proposing a new location at 3200 W. 14 Mile in Royal Oak.

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Sheetz is making a push to open a large-scale gas station and convenience store/fast-food restaurant along with a car wash in one of metro Detroit's busiest areas.

The Royal Oak Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. Monday on the conditional rezoning request for an industrial property at 3200 W. 14 Mile Road at Coolidge Highway. The plan also includes a Sheetz drive-through and outdoor cafe as well as an El Car Wash location.

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The proposed development on the triangular parcel would share a boundary with Clover Hill Park Cemetery on the Royal Oak/Birmingham border.

The 14 Mile Road property was previously home to metal fabrication business MacLean-Fogg Components. The 5.63-acre property was purchased [early last year](#) by Detroit-based developer Broder Sachse Real Estate. The company said at the time that its plan for the parcel was retail concepts.

'We have to see if it works'

The latest Sheetz proposal comes as a handful of metro Detroit communities have recently said “no” to the Altoona, Pa.-based company.

[Livonia City Council on Jan. 27 rejected Sheetz’s proposal](#) to rezone 1.8 acres at Eight Mile and Newburgh roads that would have allowed for a gas station. The denial was fueled by public outcry against Sheetz and its 24-hour business model, claiming it didn’t fit the needs of the community. However, that may not be the last of Sheetz in Livonia. Livonia City Council President Brandon McCullough told Crain’s on Jan. 28 that it’s a great development, but not right for that location.



[Farmington Hills City Council on Jan. 13 unanimously shot down](#) the company’s proposal to build a location at 27815 Middlebelt Road at 12 Mile Road — the former home of Ginopolis restaurant. The decision was backed by similar concerns voiced by the Livonia community about traffic, crime, light pollution and noise.

Sheetz also proposed stores in Rochester Hills and Waterford without success. Additionally, a Van Buren Township location slated for Ecorse and Haggerty roads was considered by the planning commission but a vote was tabled in July, Crain’s previously reported.

Some independent gas station owners also [voiced their concerns](#) over the planned Sheetz expansion in Michigan.

Royal Oak Planning Commission member Jim Ellison told Crain's he hadn't yet reviewed Sheetz's plans in depth. Ellison has visited some Sheetz stores in Pennsylvania and said he likes the service offered and the look of the facilities.

"When I heard Sheetz wanted to come into the area I got excited," Ellison said. "With that being said, we have to see if it works for this site with the traffic patterns and everything else. I think Sheetz is a good organization. It'll probably be OK. But we have to listen to the people's comments. They may tell me some things I haven't seen. I'm not immediately turned off by (Sheetz) but we have to listen to what the people say."

The owner of a gas station across from the proposed development doesn't share Ellison's optimism.

Wally Polis has owned the BP gas station at 4727 Coolidge Highway at 14 Mile Road for 18 years. He said the busy intersection isn't fit to handle all the extra traffic Sheetz would bring.

"The intersection is congested every day. People take the side streets, the residential streets, to get back over to Coolidge," Polis said. "The fact they're pushing for a Sheetz and a car wash — it'll be a madhouse. The flow of traffic every day would create a big problem."

According to city documents, the Royal Oak engineering division has concerns about the crash history at the intersection and how changes to it would impact other areas of 14 Mile Road.

Polis is also concerned about Sheetz's 24-hour model. In 2017 he decided to close his gas station from midnight-5 a.m. to limit the chance of any incidents. That came after he made about \$150,000 in updates to his gas station. Polis said he plans to attend the Feb. 11 public hearing.

"Nothing good happens after midnight," Polis said. "Sheetz is huge. It's going to have a big parking lot. People will start hanging out there at night. Things will escalate. That's how crime happens."

Polis admits he's also concerned about losing some business to Sheetz, but that he has a large group of loyal customers who would continue to support his business.

Polis is a member of a newly formed business group that opposes Sheetz's expansion into Michigan. The Metro Detroit Petroleum Alliance includes about 350 gas station owners. Co-founder Nasir Siddiqui, who also owns a BP gas station near the proposed Sheetz in Farmington Hills, said the group is not anti-business.

"If you drive by the Romulus location, you'd think it was a truck stop," Siddiqui said. "There's documentation out there from [Sheetz executives](#) saying their operation attracts different characters at night. We're not just making up these crime claims."

Polis said he believes that if Sheetz locations were built by freeways, fewer people would have a problem with them.

"My main priority, though, is what happens to this intersection," Polis said. "That affects everybody. Nobody wants to send their kids to a school in an area where there's crime and a lot of congestion."

(Upton Elementary School) is a couple hundred yards away from the intersection. That wouldn't be good for those kids."



Opposition not stopping Sheetz

A representative for Sheetz did not respond for comment on the Royal Oak proposal.

Sheetz announced its plan to enter the Michigan market in December 2022. The company aims to [open 50-60 locations in Michigan](#) over the next five to six years. So far, the chain has just one Michigan location in [Romulus that opened in August](#).

Sheetz is moving forward with other Michigan plans including a location in Chesterfield Township that got the "green light in March," Sheetz Public Relations Manager Nick Ruffner said earlier this month. Additionally, the company got rezoning approval from the Fraser City Council in October. The Roseville Planning Commission on Monday reviewed site plans for a proposed location at 18430 Utica Road.

Sheetz is [familiar with communities lobbying against it](#) as the chain pushes to widen its footprint, but the company is disappointed with recent protests, Ruffner said, adding that there is support for Sheetz locations throughout metro Detroit. Rumors of Sheetz serving as a truck stop and being a magnet for crime are false, he said.

"We also believe competition is good for Detroit-area residents," Ruffner said. "When new businesses like ours come to a market, the competition will benefit the community by driving innovation, enhancing consumer choice, lowering prices and fostering economic growth to deliver better value to customers. ..."

So far, new Sheetz locations are approved for:

- a second Romulus location, on Middlebelt Road just north of I-94 near Detroit Metropolitan Airport
- 23 Mile Road just east of Interstate 94 in Chesterfield Township
- 8200 Telegraph Road in Taylor
- 20623 Eureka Road in Taylor
- 45011 Garfield Road in Macomb Township
- 31925 Van Dyke Ave. in Warren
- 19001 E. Nine Mile in Eastpointe
- 2103 W. Michigan Ave. in Ypsilanti
- Southwest corner of 14 Mile and Utica roads in Fraser

Sheetz has more than 750 stores in Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio and Maryland and around 26,000 employees.



By **Jay Davis**

Jay Davis is a reporter covering restaurants, retail and small business issues for Crain's Detroit Business. Prior to joining Crain's in 2020, Jay held roles covering prep sports, local government, and education.

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