

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

DATE: April 25, 2016

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Vice Chair Hahn, Commissioners Boettcher, Buelow, Ballard, M. Olson, and Shortridge

ABSENT: Commissioners L. Olson and Porter

STAFF PRESENT: City Planner Carlos Espinosa

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman Hahn.

Approval of Minutes – April 11, 2016

The minutes for April 11, 2016 were reviewed and upon motion by Commissioner M. Olson and seconded by Commissioner Boettcher were unanimously approved as submitted.

Discussion – Development Code Update

Chairman Hahn introduced this item and concluded by calling upon Jeff Miller and Rita Trapp representing the Hoisington Koegler Group Inc.

Ms. Trapp noted that, given discussion occurring at the last meeting, the Commission had generally concurred with the draft annotated code outline, representing phase three of the code update project. With that, work was progressing on phase four of the project, including development code drafting. Again, her firm's plan with this phase of the project will be to develop the revised code in a series of modules to allow for a detailed review of new code language without overwhelming staff and the Planning Commission. Generally, this afternoon's discussion relates to module one including the Commission's review of proposed use tables, CBD mixed use districts, and proposed form based language proposed for downtown mixed use zoning districts. She further stated that during the consultant's next meeting with the Commission, review would begin on proposed dimensional standards for various City Zones as well as overlay districts.

Mr. Miller noted that the City's Comprehensive Plan had recommended that the present complex system of zoning within the Central Business District Core be replaced by two districts that will better promote the Comprehensive Plan's vision for the area. Given that recommendation, he had prepared a draft map showing where boundaries of these two districts might be located. In this, he explained that the core central business district area would be covered by "new" downtown mixed use district while smaller areas located both east and west of the core would be identified as downtown fringe districts. As presented today, boundaries are reflected on the Hoisington Koegler

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Group staff report attached as Exhibit A of the permanent minutes. Although both of these districts would be similar in function, the proposed downtown mixed use district would encompass a broader range of uses and intensities including government offices, significant retail establishments, arts and entertainment, lodging, conference centers, mid to high density residential, and public and private parking facilities. In part, standards pertaining to this district would emphasize river views, encourage the protection of historic buildings or groups, along with redevelopment and rehabilitation opportunities. As reflected in the comprehensive plan, the downtown fringe area would be designed to support the central downtown core with a similar mix of uses but at slightly lower intensities. Potential uses here might include an arts district, medium density residential, mixed neighborhood retail, and offices and employment centers.

Mr. Miller emphasized that pedestrian oriented design would be encouraged in both districts.

Along with the previous, a new zoning classification entitled neighborhood commercial district would initially be applied to neighborhood commercial areas located along Mankato (Third to Eighth Streets), at the corner of Fifth and Olmstead Streets, and both sides of Fifth Street between Mechanic and Baker Streets. Again, the purpose of the neighborhood commercial district would be to promote redevelopment designed to serve adjacent neighborhoods. Potential uses of this district might include medium density residential, coffee shops, existing taverns, offices, and a variety of housing types – some located above retail uses.

In further addressing the CBD core, Mr. Miller emphasized that the intent of proposed boundaries was to retain a somewhat compact area that would again promote a variety of mixed use to the area. Additionally, the majority of the area would transition to adjoining neighborhoods through existing R-3 Districts.

Following further discussion, Mr. Miller asked the Commission if it had input into proposed boundaries. Commissioner Boettcher responded that he felt the present westerly boundary of the CBD mixed use district should be moved one block westerly of Huff Street.

In response, Carlos Espinosa, City Planner, stated that although retail in nature, this area does include an automotive sales business that would not be permitted within the Downtown Mixed Use Zone. Given that extension, the use would become nonconforming. Commissioner Shortridge suggested that although the easterly boundary of the mixed use district presently excludes the Bay State property, he suggested that the map be modified to include that area as part of the downtown mixed use district. With this change, the easterly boundary of the downtown mixed use district would terminate at Kansas Street.

Mr. Espinosa explained that although the Bay State property is identified as mixed use, on the Comprehensive Plan, staff would suggest that present industrial uses located at

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the east end of the district not be zoned from manufacturing to mixed use until such time that the mixed use classification is warranted. Given that the mixed use district does abut a manufacturing district in this area, once industrial use is no longer desired, it would be fairly easy to extend the mixed use zoning concept into the industrial area. He further noted that the "immediate" application of the mixed use zoning to viable industrial areas would result in the creation of nonconformities that could limit expansion potential.

Commissioner M. Olson concurred with Mr. Shortridge that the mixed use district should be expanded to the east in accordance with Comprehensive Plan recommendation.

Mr. Miller suggested that if any Commissioner has ideas for change to boundaries, they were free to make those on maps attached to the wall.

Discussion then ensued relative to the concept of creating a free standing arts district within the southwesterly quadrant CBD core. The consensus was not to pursue this district at this time.

Mr. Miller asked the Commission if it had any feedback relative to boundaries for proposed neighborhood districts. There being none, Mr. Espinosa reviewed nonconformity language with the Commission.

At this point, Ms. Trapp reviewed proposed principal and accessory tables found on Exhibit A of the permanent minutes, with the Commission. She noted that although the Commission has been reviewing various drafts of these documents, they are approaching a final form. In a discussion of rooming house structures, Mr. Espinosa explained that structures for more than 3 units would be treated as conditional within downtown mixed use districts as well as B-2 and B-3 districts. He noted that these types of structures are generally treated as commercial. As conditional, he envisioned that the use, in all cases, would be subject to some form of onsite parking requirement. Although not currently subject to minimum lot size requirements, he also felt it would be appropriate to apply a minimum unit size of 1,000 square feet similar what is required in the B-2.5 district.

In other discussion, it was suggested that solar wind farms be added as potentially conditional uses to agricultural zoning districts. Additionally, given trends throughout the country, consideration "could" be given to permitting crematories at funeral homes. However, additional study of this use was warranted. Again, Mr. Miller noted that, although these tables were evolving, they could further be modified as work begins to progress on drafting code language.

At this point, Mr. Miller introduced "draft" standards pertaining to form based design. In short, these standards would be "requirements" and would apply to any new or developing property within the district. Again, the form based standard approach had been introduced through the Comprehensive Plan for the area. Although downtown

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uses would continue to be subject to basic standards pertaining to footprint locations, use, off-street parking, etc., form based standards would apply to the more horizontal built environment. In summary, standards would apply to:

- Building height, regulating minimum and maximum structure heights. Given draft standards, non-residential structures would need to include a height of 1.5 stories whereas mixed use and residential buildings would need to be at least 2 stories in height. Buildings and additions could be no more than one story taller or shorter than adjacent historic buildings, while new buildings and additions that are more than one story taller than adjacent buildings would need to incorporate a minimum 8 foot “step back” for the stories that are one story above adjacent buildings.
- Story height requiring a minimum 12 foot ground story height and 9 feet for upper stories.
- Building placement. This section would require that new nonresidential and mixed use buildings and additions would need to have a maximum front yard setback of 10 feet while new residential buildings and additions would need to have minimum front yard setback of 10 and maximum of 20 feet. Notwithstanding the previous, new buildings would need to follow the pattern of front yard setbacks of adjacent buildings. Additionally, new buildings and additions would need to be placed to preserve and frame views toward the river front and bluffs from public rights-of-way by orienting the longer dimension of a building perpendicular to the river front and bluffs.
- Façade street frontage requiring that structures occupy a minimum of 75% of the frontage of lot. In historic districts the minimum would be 90%.
- Façade vertical articulations/divisions, requiring that any ground story façade exceeding 40 feet in width along the street be visually divided into smaller sections through articulation of the façade. Methods for this could include recesses or projections of the building façade, window base, and balconies, and changes in exterior materials.
- Façade horizontal articulation/divisions requiring that building facades have an architectural feature at the top of the ground story and below the top story of nonresidential and mixed use building facades would have to have flat or low sloped roofs with a parapet or cornice cap while residential building could have a variety of roof types.
- Façade transparency would apply standards requiring that a certain portion of building facades, or the building as a whole be subject to window or door openings.
- Façade materials. As recommended by the Comprehensive Plan, this section would require that dominant façade materials be of masonry and other high quality durable finished material such as brick, natural stone, wood and fiber cement siding. Exposed concrete, concrete masonry units, cement board stucco, synthetic stucco, or EIFS, glass block, metal, vinyl, and aluminum would

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be prohibited materials while accent materials could include façade materials as well as glass, metal, textured concrete masonry units, and decorative tile.

- Standards would require that bright primary colors could only be used as accent colors provided that they do not exceed 15% of the façade surface area.
- Building entries. All buildings would need to have a principle entry on the primary building façade along a street and with an entry established every 50 feet of building frontage.
- Off-Street Parking. Although basic zoning would dictate the number of parking spaces required for use, any new parking structure would need to meet the same standards as those for other buildings.

Mr. Miller stated that he had also prepared draft standards pertaining to R-2 and R-3 zoned neighborhood areas located within close proximity to the core mixed use district. Standards presented for discussion included:

- Upper story setback. As with mixed use structures, new buildings or additions that are more than one story taller than adjoining buildings (non-historic) would need to incorporate a minimum 8 foot step back for the stories that are more than one story above adjacent buildings.
- Front yard setbacks would be established pursuant to those found on adjacent lots with the same block frontage. In these cases, front yard setback could not be less than the average of the setbacks of adjacent buildings on the same block frontage.
- Façade vertical and horizontal articulation would require standards similar to those found in the mixed use district.
- Façade transparency would impose standards pertaining to the ratio of building openings to total façade area.
- Façade materials would include standards similar to those found under the mixed use district.
- Building entries. This section would require primary building entry along a street façade with one occurring every 50 feet.

Mr. Miller explained that within downtown historic districts, these standards would be in addition to required design guidelines occurring from local historic designations.

Commissioner Boettcher stated that structure heights within the downtown area were established more than a century ago and he strongly favored a design concept that would serve to retain the character of current height patterns.

Upon Commission discussion, the consensus of those present was that façade street frontage requirements were generally acceptable. In addressing vertical articulation, it was felt that standards should include a minimal size for vertical articulations. It was suggested that this be 4 feet.

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In reviewing façade transparency, it was suggested that a higher standard be established for the first story. Opinion was mixed as to what the standard should be for upper stories. It was suggested that the model for this standard might include existing buildings located within the Central Business District.

In addressing potential permitted materials, Mr. Miller noted that the approved list for materials, which may be considered acceptable, could be extensive. Draft standards were simply a starting point for the discussion. He noted that this could be further discussed at a future meeting.

The Commission generally felt that a standard pertaining to required building entries in adjoining street was a good idea. Although no consensus was reached on potential color palettes, it was noted that within historic districts, property owners are guided by color standards found in design guidelines. It was suggested that if color was used on building exteriors, that paint palettes suggested in the guidelines could also be imposed on structures located outside of districts.

Mr. Miller noted that although the majority of the core Central Business District area is not subject into any form of any required off street parking, a standard for all residential use was being proposed. At present, this standard would include one space per unit for dwelling units as well as a standard for rooming houses. Along with this, it was generally felt that for new commercial and public uses within the core area, standards would be exempt. Again, he envisioned that this would provide a starting point for future discussion of this issue.

In summary, the consensus of those present was that these were good starting points.

In summarizing, Mr. Miller stated that his firm's next meeting with the Commission will be another long one and will serve to begin reviewing tables of dimensional standards for zoning districts. He also hoped to firm up draft language pertaining to mixed use districts and form based design standards as well as off street parking regulations.

Chairman Hahn thanked Mr. Miller and Ms. Trapp for attending this afternoon and stated that the Commission looked forward to their next meeting.

Discussion/Action – Proposed Commission Resolution-Sidewalks in Commercial Areas

Mr. Espinosa stated that during the Commission's last meeting, the Commission had requested staff to assemble a resolution recommending that a connection be made between the existing sidewalk at the northeast corner of Mankato Avenue and Frontenac Drive and the sidewalk as approved as part of the commercial use site plan for 919 Shives Road. At that time, the Commission had also asked that the resolution recommend studying the addition of sidewalks in other commercial areas of the City. Given those directives, the Commission was being asked to consider and approve a

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resolution before it this afternoon. Again, the purpose of this resolution was to begin implementing the previous directives.

Following consideration of the resolution, it was recommended by Commissioner Shortridge and seconded by Commissioner M. Olson to approve the resolution included in the Commission's agenda package. When the question was called, the vote of the Commission was unanimous to approve the motion.

Discuss Process to Elect a Commission Vice Chair

Given his move from the Vice Chair to the Chair position, Chairman Hahn noted that the Vice Chair vacancy needs to be filled. Prior to formalizing the process, he asked if any Commissioner would be willing to taking the position. Following consideration, Commissioner Buelow stated that he would be willing to accept that position for the remainder of the year.

Other Business

Mr. Espinosa stated that the Architectural Review Board would be meeting on April 27th to review building plans for the redevelopment of the Timber's property. In part, this review had been established on the basis that the site is located within proposed boundaries of the downtown mixed use district. He emphasized that although the meeting was public, it was not being established as a public hearing.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.



Mark Moeller
City Planner