



NOTES
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE, MINNESOTA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024
6:30-8:30 PM CITY HALL

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- A. Community Development Director Jason Lindahl provided an overview of the meeting and introduced the consultant team.
- B. Question: did staff approve what is being presented, or just consultants? Yes, staff approved, but nothing is finalized at this point. This information serves as a starting point for discussion
- C. Two main questions for tonight's discussion: Where do we apply conventional vs. form based zoning? Also, what is the appropriate height limit across the city (starting, but not resolving, this question)

2. MEETING PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

- A. Prior CAC meeting summary
 - Overview of place types and a deeper dive for the some of the more complex ones
 - This current agenda will be building on what was covered during the last two meetings, recapping at a high level and talk through that going forward
- B. Project schedule and milestones
 - We are about a third through the process, at the hinge point from place type analysis and directions to the project approach
 - After this point, will be moving into the zoning code development process
- C. Objectives for today's meeting
 - Review materials and respond, considering two questions referenced above: (1) where do we apply conventional vs. form-based zoning, and (2) what areas of the city may be appropriate to allow height above 3-stories or 35 feet?

3. DIRECTIONS REPORT OVERVIEW

- A. Overview of report
 - Kirk provided an overview of the directions report
 - Biggest themes in update: implementation, modernization, and simplification
 - Work to date included a review of the plans and policies, and existing conditions, as well as the place type exercise discussed later in agenda
- B. Priority areas for updates
 - Main focus on ensuring comprehensive plan conformance, especially land use, housing, and natural resources sections
 - Focus on returning to community's historic more walkable, mixed use development patterns
 - Focus on redevelopment near areas of significant public investment
 - Focus on sustainability, green infrastructure, environmental considerations
 - Focus on housing, expanding range of options and choices within the city – note that over half of the city dedicated to single family residential with larger lots
 - Modernizing and updating land use classification system and addressing accessory structures
 - Use objective standards for evaluation, simplify lot and building standards, consolidate zoning classifications where possible
 - Focus on building scale and regulation, not arbitrary density limits, right-sizing parking

requirements, reducing the need for variances, and consolidation and clarification of procedures

- Reorganize and reformat to make it easier to use, use tables and illustrations

4. PLACE TYPE APPROACH

A. Approach to zoning using place types

- Transitioning to more place-based approach in more areas – currently in downtown, and proposing to expand that to other Centers place types in the city
- Focus on making areas more walkable through design, as well as having objective regulations that are more predictable for developers, and more efficient for the city to review and approve
- Higher level of design standards, address street facades and relationship to sidewalk, and focus on massing relationship to surrounding context
- Will be transitioning place types to zoning – looking at sets of characteristics to include in zoning to get to predictable outcomes
- Place types will guide but not be identical to forthcoming zoning
- Determine where in city place-based approach applies, and what are key characteristics of these areas

5. PLACE TYPES DISCUSSION

A. Overview of place type locations and descriptions

- Creating the glide path to zoning process
- Overview of centers: downtown, regional, community, and neighborhood – varied by scale, function, use, and location
- Note that Boat Works site and the Old Public Work sites are a Community Center, defined more by their relationship to each other and the lake and less to the adjacent neighborhood
- Regional Centers: high value commercial, with increased mixed use and connectivity, largely maintaining existing uses
- Downtown: core traditional commercial area, edge transitional uses with adjacency with the surrounding neighborhoods, sub-core with some suburban/auto oriented uses located outside of core area
- Community Centers: maintain economic viability of commercial in core, while also encouraging medium to high density housing nearby in edge area
- Neighborhood Centers: some pockets of accessible/walkable commercial with medium density housing; some dormant/vacant retail to revitalize
- Height limits
 - Regional Center – 5 stories max adjacent to highway, Edge areas 4 stories abutting core or 35E, 3 max adjacent to neighborhood, conventional zoning
 - Downtown – 2 stories minimum; 4 stories maximum in core, 3 stories maximum adjacent to neighborhood, place based zoning
 - Community center – 4 stories max with 5 stories max along 61 and at the Old Public Works site, 3 max adjacent to neighborhood, place based zoning
 - Neighborhood center – 4 stories max on County Road E, 3 stories max adjacent to neighborhood, place based zoning
- All neighborhood types are proposed as conventional: Island, Lakeside, Traditional, Suburban, and Multifamily; this is based on the fact that pattern/design is largely established and unlikely to change much
- For Island and Lakeside types, there has been a fair amount of incremental infill redevelopment

over time

- For Traditional types, this area is predominately single family homes however, it does include a mixture of duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and small apartments
- For suburban types, most of it is signal-family housing built within an established era and type; however, this area also includes some duplexes
- For Multifamily types, often R6 and/or PUDs, many are townhomes, pod developments, have similar style within each neighborhood
- Districts tend to be stand alone and single purpose areas, including industrial and campus districts; note there may be some diversification that could happen around the college campus though that depends on availability of state owned land

B. Work group discussion

- Question: how often are you getting developers who want more than 3 stories now, and what need does it address in the community?
- Most developers are aware of the city's current height standards, but it is common to discuss additional height that could be allowed through the existing code or a PUD
- Economics of buildings mean that heights inform development feasibility – more units may equal a more feasible project
- Note that Barnum and Lochner originally proposed 5 stories, but city was unwilling to go more than 4 stories max
- More units on the site can potentially support more affordable housing units
- Considering inclusionary zoning standards to support more affordable housing units
- Note that higher densities aren't necessarily more affordable
- It would be nice to see what sub-core downtown looks like on diagram, including what happens in the new school area – noted that this detail is in the packet
- Housing types and height standards will be informed by the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the City Council's on-going housing and development priorities discussion
- Will be willing to consider boundary modifications, including arts district
- Question: what does walkability look like for neighborhood centers? These are relatively small areas – note that it's walkable from the surrounding neighborhood, but otherwise people will need to drive there most likely; part of it is buildings that front on sidewalks and have direct way to walk to the front door, improvements to surrounding roadway connectivity, spacing of front doors; 3 topics – placement of building on the site, placement of parking on the site, and facilities to get people to the front door (e.g., sidewalks, bike parking, etc.)
- To understand walkable areas, best example is downtown experience; note this doesn't mean converting other areas to be just like downtown – especially in areas with more auto oriented uses; other walkable areas are traditional neighborhoods
- Would like to see examples of what walkable areas look like vs. non-walkable areas
- The approach to place based versus conventional zoning seems like a reasonable starting point for discussion
- Expectation that broader place types will be divided into subtypes when it comes to assigning zoning
- Note there will be a relationship between edge of a center and a multifamily neighborhood, because there's some commonality there
- On the topic of relaxing density limits in favor of a form based approach, how does this work? For other communities following this approach, less focus on density as a metric and more on bulk and scale. For communities who maintain minimum parking requirements, tie it to number of units or

bedrooms in housing development and square footage for commercial uses

- Could this open up areas for unconventional redevelopment approaches? Something like the Rooney Farm site south of County E (ecofriendly homes). In the case of this zoning approach, it's more about compact and walkable design aspirations related to the traditional development pattern for the city.
- Question if want to take some risk and invite some creativity in terms of the development happening here. Note that redevelopment is likely to be piecemeal. Also hoping for a level of predictability for developers to meet regarding standards. Currently there is a lot of subjectivity in the code, especially regarding PUDs.
- Note that Buerkle Road area also is industrial now (north side of I-694); but this is currently identified in the comprehensive plan as a business park so not shown as a district. Distinction is somewhat a matter of degree
- Need to clarify difference between business parks and industrial - business parks have more focus on office and more job density, and possibly more stories; industrial is more focused on production, with limited office and different building forms

6. ZONING CODE NEXT STEPS

A. Next steps using place types in code update process

- This is a start of the conversation – welcome feedback on the information presented in the directions report, and refinements
- This is high level direction, but will get into more detail later
- This is an iterative process that will go forward in stages, adding detail as we go

B. Key discussion items: form-based vs conventional zoning and height guidance

- These were included in the discussion above
- Need to understand what a place based approach for neighborhood centers could look like – examples will be forthcoming in future stages
- Would place based zoning require redevelopment of many sites? New place based zoning would not require redevelopment. Existing sites would be allowed to remain as they are in perpetuity. Should they wish to expand or redevelop, the place based standards would offer a wider range of development options than current zoning
- Using conventional zoning for neighborhood uses makes sense. Intrigued by use of accessory buildings and ADUs.
- Idea of higher stories along the freeway – no issues with this, but opposed to higher buildings adjacent to other roads
- Arts district – intrigued about design attributes of this as a district; also thinking about ways to incorporate arts and culture that don't even need zoning change; note arts center and Lakeshore have purchased some homes for future redevelopment
- Does public safety/fire department have to weigh in on place based design? Need to think about water/sewer service and other implications. Think through issues and if it creates challenges. This will be addressed in the next step, including consultation with other city departments and agencies (police, fire, watershed, public works, etc.)
- When it comes to neighborhood and community centers, some CAC members were having trouble picturing the fringes of these areas – how deep in the surrounding areas, and how they are connected; will likely not suggest we expand into neighborhood – except perhaps adjacent homes that are converted to “cottage commercial” small scale commercial uses
- Note that arts districts can drive economic growth and activity

- Want to ensure a strong nexus between community need and what's recommended – make sure to reference what needs are being addressed with each recommendation

7. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND NEXT STEPS

A. Planning for public engagement

- Will schedule open house for second half of March or early April
- Hard to get people to the meetings for topics like zoning – need to make content accessible and not too technical
- Would like to ensure people feel they can have meaningful input throughout the process at appropriate times
- Ensure that process is accessible so people with disabilities can be involved – important to hear those voices and perspectives
- Be thoughtful about what's needed, wanted, and financially supportable in terms of regulatory guidance
- There will be other more engaging public event opportunities later in the process
- Councilmember Walsh stated he like the “What We Have Heard So Far” items and suggested prioritizing the top 5 topics:
 - Protect and grow White Bear Lake
 - Protect established neighborhoods
 - Respect context
 - Economic development
 - Increase housing choices and ownership opportunities
- Make sure this doesn't get confused with downtown study, which has gotten controversial
- Dial back the jargon in explaining this so it's not so daunting
- Use visuals to help explain the concepts – either WBL or nearby community
- Should include the housing survey results and see about implications – see what data suggests in terms of housing needs
- Maybe get an article in the newspaper, or send out media release

B. Schedule for future CAC meetings

- Depending on feedback on the materials here and open house input
- Goal would be coming back together in early spring with first of 3 sections of the zoning code for review
- Send comments to Jason on the draft materials over next week or so

8. ADJOURNMENT