



NOTES
DEVELOPER FOCUS GROUP
CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE, MINNESOTA
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023
9-11:00 AM BOATWORKS COMMONS COMMUNITY ROOM
4495 LAKE AVENUE SOUTH

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

A. Participants

- Mike Brass, Titus Commercial Real Estate
- Ari Parritz, Afton Park
- Joy Erickson, Edina Realty
- Ryan McKilligan, Element Design-Build
- Peter Orth, Schafer Richardson
- Blake Martin, Linn Companies commercial real estate

B. City staff

- Jason Lindahl, Community Development Director
- Tracy Shimek, Housing and Economic Development Coordinator
- Ashton Miller, City Planner
- Shea Lawrence, Planning Technician

C. Consultant team

- Leslie Oberholtzer, Codametrics
- Haila Maze, Bolton & Menk

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

- A.** Consultants Leslie Oberholtzer and Haila Maze provided an overview of the project scope and approach to the participants and answered general questions

3. PROJECT AND PROCESS GOALS DISCUSSION

- As a whole, the city is fully developed, so all development is infill
- Want to know what sort of development the city wants to see here, and affirm it's not just about blocking development
- When a proposed building needs flexibility in zoning, could use a preliminary sketch plan process to vet ideas, example of Hugo's concept plan review process.
- The fewer requirements for concept review, the more you'll see of them. Cost considerations limit the amount being spent at this stage.
- How much control do you want neighborhoods to have at an early stage regarding their review; opposition can stop development from happening, and site may be infeasible for the use desired by the community
- Want flexibility at the concept stage to revisit options for the site
- By-right development would be great if (and only if) the proposed uses were market feasible, but there is often a disconnect between long term goals of the comprehensive and current market conditions
- City residents have voiced opposition to four-story buildings which stopped a project proposed near downtown before it could be considered by the Planning Commission or City Council
- Questions about how to relate to City Council regarding potential city cost participation in a project – clarify process and expectations for how to approach
- Would like insights on City Council position on projects; make more transparent and accessible to connect with them
- Need both a predictable by-right option as well as a way to take an alternative path with a new idea that

wasn't anticipated (relief mechanisms to city requirements); also do not want to spend tens of thousands of dollars on a concept without a sense if it will be acceptable; need to be able to take the pulse of where the city council is earlier on

- Noted that they have met with city council members in other cities, but not the standard approach here
- A three-story height limit is virtually prohibitive of multifamily development; did make a four story project in Stillwater work, with some negotiations with the city
- Suburbs use dwelling units/acre or FAR to measure density; consider another approach using building envelope and also visuals
- Use a “what does density look like” tool to help people understand
- Biggest topics with the public are likely to be height and parking
- Parking needs a more sliding scale, sophisticated set of rules than it has now
- Need better guidance for height as well
- Question if city will establish parking minimums – will be revisiting them as part of this process; private market insights will inform discussion. Note that developers have an incentive to get parking ratios right or they won't be able to lease units.
- The code has shared parking and density bonus options, but they don't function that well – need to explore why
- Different city departments have differing views on how to approach parking regulations. Public works has challenges to work around with cleaning and plowing streets requiring removal of vehicles
- Overparked areas don't benefit the community at all – look into parking utilization rates
- Useful to have a focus group with area residents and real estate professionals on the front end; however, would want a broader representation
- Explore tree ordinance – people are being fined at a high level for cutting trees without a permit
- Consider EAW petitions which are sometimes used to block or delay projects; can there be changes to discretionary EAW guidelines
- Need more diverse representation besides narrow group usually involved
- Have conversations with community about acceptable heights
- May also address building materials and percentages in code
- The zoning update process should work to educate the public about the scope of influence and legal limitations of zoning. For example, zoning regulations cannot determine whether a development project will be rental or owner occupied.

4. PUBLIC OUTREACH AND NEXT STEPS

- Follow the project website for updates on the project's progress
- The project team may be in touch regarding future reviews

5. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM