

**Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
October 23, 2019
City Hall Council Chambers
220 Clay Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa**

MINUTES

The Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission met in regular session on Wednesday, October 23, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers, 220 Clay Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa. The following Commission members were present: Adkins, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux and Saul. Hartley and Wingert were absent. Karen Howard, Community Services Manager and Jadevsinh Atodaria, Planner I, were also present.

- 1.) Chair Holst noted the Minutes from the October 9, 2019 regular meeting are presented. Mr. Leeper made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Ms. Saul seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 7 ayes (Adkins, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux and Saul), and 0 nays.

- 2.) The first item of business was the *Imagine Downtown!* Vision Plan. Chair Holst introduced the item and Ms. Howard noted that late correspondence was received from Community Main Street. She then provided background information and addressed some of the comments and questions from the last meeting. She discussed the study area and how the boundaries were created, as it was noted that it is a bigger area than most people would have expected. When the boundaries were set up, they were thinking about how to transition from downtown into the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as looking at the zoning districts. She also addressed concerns mentioned with regard to how much public outreach was done. She displayed a list detailing the planning process and discussed the various opportunities to weigh in on the plan.

Ms. Howard discussed the City Council Project priorities, which include creating a vision plan to manage change over time and basing the plan on broad community input. The Council wants to create a safe and welcoming process to explore ideas and to base the plan on market realities, changing demographics and diversity of issues, including future technology, transportation and housing needs. The idea is to build on success and maintain a unique sense of place while encouraging economic development based on the vision, as well as to establish clear and objective zoning standards to achieve the adopted community vision.

Ms. Howard also noted the big ideas that were brought forward by the public, which included improved walkability for safety, connectivity and comfort. It was also a priority to respect historic character, add street trees and other green space, and to re-think parking. Added housing options for all ages and making biking easier beyond the trails was also suggested. She discussed visualizing change and how to address it when it does occur, noting that matching the current zoning with the Community's vision is important. There is also a need for a plan and a zoning code that address change when it occurs. The plan will help to visualize the relationship between buildings and

the street and create the unique sense of place that is Downtown Cedar Falls. She cited examples from the plan to give an idea of potential proposals. Ms. Howard also discussed the street section of the plan, particularly the Main Street corridor. She noted that the plan indicates how a 4 to 3-lane conversion would help to achieve some of goals of the plan to provide a more comfortable space for pedestrians, add street trees, and on-street bike lanes. However, she noted that continued discussion and study and discussion would take place as the City gets into more detailed design of the corridor.

Ms. Howard spoke to the comments received from the Community Main Street requesting additional language be added to the plan to emphasize preservation and adaptive re-use of existing buildings. Howard indicated that staff worked with the consultant to identify specific places in the plan where these points could be emphasized. She noted that one of the “big ideas” highlighted in the plan is to “respect the historic character” and described the implementation strategies listed in the plan to help achieve this goal. The ideas include: re-use of buildings and preserving significant architecture, establishing zoning to respect the scale and character of the historic context, making sure rules enable small scale infill and redevelopment and management of the scale and massing of buildings to transition between Downtown and nearby neighborhoods.

In response to Community Main Street’s inquiry about whether the Downtown Vision Plan is consistent with the recent Downtown Parking Study, Howard noted that the Vision Plan calls for building on the recommendations of the Downtown Parking Study. She presented the list of long term strategies from the Parking Study, including the potential need to monetize on-street parking in the future to support structured parking (parking ramp), re-evaluation of zoning requirements for downtown residential developments and exploring potential public/private partnerships with developers to create additional public parking. These are all the same things that are noted in the Downtown Vision Plan.

Ms. Howard briefly showed the character map and the overarching recommendations of the plan. She also discussed setting the stage for new zoning and the general timeline for completing the zoning code work.

Carol Lilly, Community Main Street, thanked staff and the Commission for their effort and read a copy of the letter submitted to the Commission (attached). She noted that a team from their Board and from their design committee met, went through the plan and provided comments. They would like to ensure that the parking study and the Vision Plan are working together, particularly with regard to monetizing parking. She also noted that they would like to see emphasis on adaptive re-use. Ms. Howard stated that staff is in agreement. Mr. Holst asked if the comments from Community Main Street will be addressed in the plan. Ms. Howard indicated that the additional language suggested by staff in response to Community Main Street’s request could be added to the draft plan at the direction of the Commission. Ms. Lilly also wanted to clarify that preserve and respect are not the same and would like to ensure that the character is preserved as well as respected. Mr. Holst also asked if Community Main Street had any thoughts regarding how the historic homes are designated within the Overman Park area. Ms. Lilly noted that it was brought up because she wanted to know if the

intent was to landmark individual properties, and noted that there was discussion of local historic designation during the process of adopting the National Historic District designation in the downtown and there not being support at the time, so advised to be cautious about local historic designation. Ms. Howard stated that the intent of the plan is to take care in setting up the new zoning so that new development envisioned by the plan is made easier, while avoiding unintended consequences for historic buildings.

Mike Hayworth, 1508 Orchard Drive, noted that he would like to the boundaries expanded for the single-family conversion incentive program.

Mr. Holst inquired whether the motion for approval should include the additional language outlined in the staff presentation. Howard stated that if the Commission agrees with the additional language it should be included in the motion to approve.

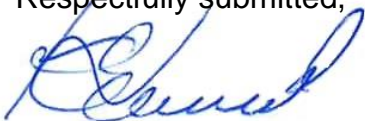
Mr. Leeper commended City staff for taking on this project and thanked them for their work.

Mr. Leeper made a motion to approve the item with the additional verbiage outlined in the staff presentation. Ms. Prideaux seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 7 ayes (Adkins, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux and Saul), and 0 nays.

- 3.) As there were no further comments, Ms. Saul made a motion to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously with 7 ayes (Adkins, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux and Saul), and 0 nays.

The meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Howard
Community Services Manager



Joanne Goodrich
Administrative Clerk



310 East 4th Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Phone: 319-277-0213
www.communitymainstreet.org

October 23, 2019

Members of Planning and Zoning and City Staff,

The Cedar Falls' Downtown District is a thriving neighborhood within the Cedar Valley. As the restored center of the city, the downtown district is a vibrant community for living, working, shopping, dining, entertainment and exploring our past. To quote the Imagine Downtown Vision Plan, "City leadership, Community Main Street, and local business owners have worked together to revitalize Main Street and create a vibrant destination for boutique shopping, restaurants, and other entertainment opportunities." This plan itself is another example of the collaborative efforts taken to maintain and grow the economic vitality of the downtown commercial district and its surrounding area.

**2019-2020
Board of Directors:**

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Following the Main Street approach to economic development, adopted by the city and CMS in 1987, the assessed value of the district has since increased by 821%. Using this approach throughout the historic neighborhood, the rehabilitated buildings provide a "community DNA" that serves to connect our collective past with our contemporary lives. Considering our role as leaders in this approach for commercial development, today, we are writing to share our thoughts of the Imagine Downtown Cedar Falls Vision Plan draft currently under consideration. Even a quick glance through the plan makes one excited for the future of the downtown. Our observations are as follows:

- The "character areas" established in the plan are well thought out and have captured the essence of the established building stock.
- District gateways and a complimentary, well-planned transition into the neighborhood are critical to connectivity between downtown and the greater community.
- We applaud the recommendation to respect the historic character of the district, which is mentioned several times in the document. Including an emphasis on the preservation of the historic character merits strong consideration by the commission.
- "What if" designs in the prototypical sites section focus more heavily on new construction rather than adaptive reuse of existing structures and the images used exemplify this approach. In this section, we encourage including adaptive reuse visuals within the document to portray the option of reuse along with the new development examples.
- The parking recommendations in this document are different from the recommendations of the parking study. Which approach will be used when developing code? Adopting two different approaches to tackle parking in the district is problematic and does not provide city staff with proper direction to develop code.
- We wholeheartedly agree that building height affects neighborhood character. We encourage use of existing historical structures be used to define the height limits on new construction, such as the Oster Regent Theatre example on page 35.
- Although we typically defer to the Overman Park Neighborhood Association to be the voice for district residents, we noticed and felt the need to comment on the suggestion of specific designations for historic homes. Who determines the designation and what specifically does that mean?

We sincerely thank city staff, elected officials, commission members and community volunteers for investing both financial resources and time into creating the plan. Knowing future city code over both existing buildings and new construction projects will be based upon its contents, we recognize the level of importance the visioning document carries.

We encourage the community to continue pursuing the current due diligence that is underway in devising an appropriate final draft that meets the challenges of future development while maintaining and supporting the existing built infrastructure and capitalizing on the potential of adaptive reuse.

In summary, we request your careful consideration of our suggestions as you finalize the draft of the Imagine Downtown Cedar Falls Vision Plan you ultimately recommend city council adopt.

With best regards,

Carol Lilly
Executive Director

Amy Mohr
Board Chair

