

**Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
February 10, 2021
Via Videoconference
Cedar Falls, Iowa**

MINUTES

The Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission met in regular session on February 10, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via videoconference due to precautions necessary to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The following Commission members were present: Hartley, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch and Saul, Schrad. Prideaux and Sears were absent. Karen Howard, Community Services Manager, Michelle Pezley, Planner III and Chris Sevy, Planner I were also present.

- 1.) Chair Leeper noted the Minutes from the January 27, 2021 regular meeting are presented. Ms. Saul made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Mr. Hartley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 7 ayes (Hartley, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Saul and Schrad), and 0 nays.

- 2.) The first item of business was a presentation regarding the draft of the *Imagine College Hill! Vision Plan*. Chair Leeper introduced the item and Ms. Pezley provided background information. Mary Madden and Geoff Ferrell were present to discuss the project. Ms. Madden noted that City Council initiated the project in January of 2020 when they adopted a set of priorities for updating the College Hill Plan. She displayed a rendering of the boundaries of the area being discussed and explained what is in the vision plan. This project is meant to continue the good work of the College Hill Partnership and to define the public realm with active building facades, improved sidewalks and additional street trees. The plan will also work to create more walkability and support a multi-modal environment. Creation of gateways will provide a sense of arrival and there will be exploration of opportunities for new and improved public spaces. Establishing a true bicycle network and coordination of parking supply management would also be a plan recommendation.

Ms. Madden described the analysis process and how they interacted with the public to get feedback with regard to changes they would like to see. An economist looked at the demographics, housing market and retail market in Cedar Falls as a whole as well within the College Hill area. A transportation engineer looked at mobility issues to help decide what is needed. A virtual charrette took place to help allow the public to be involved in the process and provide feedback. She also discussed current realities with housing and commercial markets with regard to the College Hill area, including parking issues, creating open space and a bigger retail base to provide greater diversity.

Ms. Madden discussed the overall strategy needed to create an improved pedestrian environment, increase development potential and appropriate parking and parking management. She discussed community aspirations that were received during the charrettes, which included stabilizing and enhancing neighborhoods, concentrate and intensify student housing near campus, connecting the upper and lower hill, treating natural areas as amenities, better management of parking, improved walkability and biking and increasing retail and dining options. They looked at what the areas are like now and what they might look like in the future and provided examples of how the use may be the same but how character is different. She discussed the different character areas they defined in their research and showed a rendering of their locations.

Mr. Ferrell spoke about the vision for the area and how the idea is not ultimately to change it,

but to enhance it. He provided examples of several “what if” scenarios to show illustrations of potential enhancements and improvements throughout the College Hill area.

Ms. Madden reviewed the recommendations and the next steps that would happen in the near term. She covered some frequently asked questions and provided answers and explanations. She also noted that this is currently a public review draft and that they would still like feedback from people who have suggestions, questions or comments. She covered a brief timeline for the plan.

Mr. Leeper asked where the public can find a copy of the report. Ms. Madden explained that it will be uploaded to the OurCedarFalls.com website. Ms. Pezley noted there will also be copies at the Cedar Falls Library and City Hall. Ms. Lynch expressed gratitude for the work that has been done with the project.

Ms. Saul asked what is meant by a parking district. Ms. Madden explained that in some communities a parking management district has been created to provide on-street parking permits for those who live in the area.

Mr. Schrad asked if this would be considered a TIF district. Ms. Howard stated that the main area of College Hill is already a TIF district.

- 3.) The next item for consideration by the Commission was a College Hill Neighborhood Overlay Review for 704-706 W. 28th Street. Chair Leeper introduced the item and Mr. Sevy provided background information. This item is being brought back to the Commission from the last Planning and Zoning meeting. Mr. Sevy explained that the proposal is to add bedrooms and other appropriate updates to the property with the intent to double the rental occupancy of the property. A further consideration is the additional driveway that was permitted and constructed but should have been reviewed by the Commission. Each unit currently has two bedrooms and 760 square feet of finished floor space. The proposed remodel would bring each unit to four bedrooms and a total of 1,520 square feet. The addition of bedrooms in the College Hill Neighborhood Overlay District requires review and approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The intent of the District is to preserve neighborhood character, stabilize neighborhoods and provide more scrutiny with changes in density and other factors that affect neighborhoods in the Overlay.

Mr. Sevy discussed the change in density and explained that the original design and intent of the property was not to accommodate 8 people, and that doubling the occupancy will have external effects that are anticipated to detract from the character of the neighborhood. Those factors include increase number of cars associated with the property, increased traffic from those cars and visitors, increased need for parking accommodations that will reduce mature trees and usable outdoor space and wear and tear of higher occupancy on a modest sized property. He displayed a map of the neighborhood showing the occupancy level of the homes in the area, and clarified that the levels may change upon sales of properties. He discussed the driveways associated with the property and open space/landscaping requirements. Although the new driveway was not approved by the Commission and is slightly larger than allowed, for practical reasons, the owner will not be expected to reduce the width of the driveway. However, landscaping requirements will need to be met. Staff recommends denial of the request to add bedrooms, but also recommends that the Commission retroactively approve the second driveway with the conditions that landscaping be added to restore what was removed. He clarified that the denial of the additional units is based on density, not on making improvements to the property.

Mr. Schrad asked if this property would be allowed if it started with one bedroom per unit upgrading to three. Mr. Sevy explained the process of reviewing the criteria and how that

would be determined. Mr. Larson asked about the retroactive approval of the driveway and whether the permit has been opened and closed. He also asked if the landscaping item was tied into that part of the request. Mr. Sevy replied that he was not certain if the permit had been closed, but the work has been finished on the driveway. He indicated that the landscaping recommendation was related to the parking.

Wes Geisler, 5373 S. Hudson Road, addressed a complaint from a nearby neighbor about on-street parking, stating that he believes the tenants would choose to park in tandem in the driveway as opposed to parking further away on the street. He provided information on comparable properties nearby to show why he feels his project should be allowed. He also noted that he intends to replace the landscaping as soon as the weather cooperates.

Bob Diedrichs, owner of 2804 Walnut Street, commented that the College Hill Overlay Plan was a way for the neighbors to know what they could and couldn't do within the area. He stated that if the project does not fall within the guidelines of the plan, exceptions should not be made or there is no purpose to the plan.

Sue Doody, 2816 Walnut Street, stated concerns with the project. She feels that this project is counter to the way the duplex was originally designed to create two modest sized units. She also believes that the change that required all parking to be concrete is creating more flooding issues on her street when it rains. If more people and more parking continued to be added, this will affect homes in the area. She also noted that during the development of the College Hill Plan that one of the goals was to maintain a diversity of housing for many different people, not just college students. She feels that this is an increase to density but will reduce the diversity of housing in the area.

Mr. Holst made a motion to approve the driveway with the recommended landscaping requirements. As there was no second the Commission continued discussion.

Mr. Larson noted that he is not comfortable retroactively approving the driveway and then approving requirements that have not been done. He moved to permanently table the driveway item. Ms. Lynch seconded the motion.

Ms. Howard asked for clarification on what the Commission would intend by tabling the item. Mr. Larson explained that he feels that the item is a moot point at this time and he feels that this is the way to dismiss the item. Mr. Holst stated that he believes that the applicant needs to have some closure stating that the City issued the permit prior to Commission reviewing it so this would be the opportunity for the Commission to make a recommendation to Council so that the matter could be settled. He stated that he believes it is the Commission's role to give a recommendation on this matter. Mr. Larson stated that he doesn't feel comfortable approving something that is in violation. He doesn't feel the Commission should approve or deny the item. Ms. Howard clarified the Commission role in this matter as a recommending body to the Council. It is the City Council that ultimately approves or denies or approves with conditions. Mr. Larson asked if it would be appropriate to defer the item until the item could be discussed with the City Attorney.

Mr. Larson made the motion to table the item regarding the driveway until it can be discussed with the City Attorney. Ms. Saul seconded the motion. The motion was approved with 4 ayes (Larson, Lynch, Saul and Schrad) and 3 nays (Hartley, Holst and Leeper).

Discussion regarding density resumed. Mr. Holst noted that he was contacted by Melanie Griffith and a letter was distributed to the Commission. He did encourage her and neighbors to attend the meeting to voice their concerns. Mr. Schrad also noted his concern with the density. Mr. Sevy and Ms. Howard gave further insight into the added scrutiny for housing in the

College Hill Overlay District.

Ms. Saul made a motion to approve the added bedrooms. Mr. Larson seconded the motion.

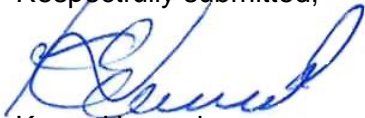
There was brief discussion regarding the intent of the overlay and thoughts regarding the project.

The motion was denied with 3 ayes (Larson, Lynch and Saul), and 4 (Hartley, Holst, Leeper, and Schrad) nays.

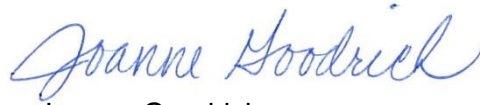
- 4.) As there were no further comments, Ms. Lynch made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Hartley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 7 ayes (Hartley, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Saul and Schrad), and 0 nays.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Howard
Community Services Manager



Joanne Goodrich
Administrative Assistant