

**Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
October 14, 2020
Via Videoconference
Cedar Falls, Iowa**

MINUTES

The Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission met in regular session on October 14, 2020 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, Prideaux, Saul and Schrad. Ms. Adkins was absent. Karen Howard, Community Services Manager, Thomas Weintraut, Planner III, and Jaydevsinh Atodaria, Planner I, were also present.

- 1.) Chair Holst noted the Minutes from the September 23, 2020 regular meeting are presented. Mr. Leeper made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Mr. Hartley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 8 ayes (Hartley, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux, Saul and Schrad), and 0 nays.
- 2.) The first item of business was a special presentation with regard to the *Imagine College Hill!* Virtual community design charrette. Chair Holst introduced the item and Ms. Howard introduced members of the consultant team, including Geoff Ferrell, Mary Madden and Anita Morrison. Ms. Madden provided some background information about the project, noting that City Council adopted a set of project priorities and she explained the tasks for the consultants. Their first goal was to understand College Hill, and she noted that their study area was bigger than what is traditionally considered as College Hill. They looked at historic plans, the zoning ordinance and they walked around the area to get a feel for what the district is like currently. They analyzed what they saw and met with the public to get feedback with regard to what they like and didn't like about the area and what they would like to see change. The first week of October the team conducted a virtual community design charrette to give the public an opportunity for engagement to further express what they would like to see in the future. The topics people were most interested in discussing were preserving the neighborhoods, walkability and sidewalks, street trees and natural amenities, retail and dining options and bicycles. There were also technical meetings that included different departments within the city, as well as outside such as MET Transit, UNI, the College Hill Partnership, etc.

Ms. Madden discussed the "big ideas" for College Hill based on all the public input:

- stabilizing and enhancing the neighborhoods
- concentrating and intensifying student housing near the campus
- reconnecting the Upper and Lower Hill
- improving walkability
- increasing retail and dining options
- treating natural areas as amenities (adding and maintaining street trees)
- making biking easier by improving connections to trails and downtown
- managing parking better

She discussed the mobility of College Hill and noted that the transportation analyst on the team has looking at the different aspects of mobility in the area and the parking standards.

Ms. Morrison spoke about the housing market and how it is directly tied to enrollment at the university. She also discussed the potential for converting student housing to single-family north of 18th Street and east of Iowa Street. She then discussed the commercial market, explaining that there is a need for a bigger retail customer base to provide more diversity and provided information on ways to do that.

Mr. Ferrell discussed the different character areas in the study area and provided a map displaying their boundaries. He discussed the overall Illustrative Vision Plan, explaining that it is all a work in progress. The Illustrative Plan is an illustration of things that could happen under the vision given some policy and regulation adjustments. He emphasized that it is intended to give an idea of what could happen, not necessarily what will happen. He clarified that generally these are not things that the city will do, but is about encouraging private sector development in support of the vision. He provided renderings of different potential ideas for the College Hill area. He provided information for deadlines for comments and input.

Mr. Schrad asked about the potential changes to the ordinances and what will prompt those changes. Ms. Madden explained the updating the zoning ordinance is the next step in the project. Mr. Farrell stated that parking could be a larger part of the equation and they will be looking at how that may be adjusted. Ms. Saul stated that she feels that building height needs to be looked at as well and noted that the project shows the potential for much needed improvement. Mr. Larson asked about the proposed timeframe on transforming the vision into proposed changes to code. Ms. Madden provided information on the timeline.

- 3.) The next item for consideration by the Commission was a Land Use Map Amendment and rezoning request within the Pinnacle Prairie Mixed Use Development. Chair Holst introduced the item and Ms. Howard provided background information. She explained that the property is located north of Huntington Road and west of Cedar Heights Drive. The area proposed for rezoning to MU is approximately 15 acres, which would then be incorporated into the larger Pinnacle Prairie master planned area. This item was discussed in September and some updates have been made to the proposal. Ms. Howard discussed the proposed zoning and displayed the 2015 Master Plan for Pinnacle Prairie and an aerial photo of the current build-out of the area to display the area being considered. Staff recommends approval of a land use map amendment to this area so that it reflects “planned development” instead of “office and business park.” Ms. Howard also discussed the rezoning request and what it entails. She showed the proposed update to the master plan for Pinnacle Prairie, which would include the proposed multi-family area near Cedar Heights Drive and a refined street and block pattern to replace the bubble diagram from the 2015 master plan. She noted that water, electric, gas and communications utility services are available, as well as sanitary sewer lines. She noted that some new lots will not be allowed to be platted with more than 25% of the lot in the floodplain. She noted that street and lots shown on the concept plan will need to be adjusted at the time of platting. The developer has noted this on the updated master plan. Ms. Howard also discussed the open space, parks and trails. A revised concept provides trail connection to the commercial area and the calculation of open space, parks and trails have been updated with the new area added. She noted that there was discussion of further refinement of the townhome area and noted that the revised layout illustrates the majority of the townhomes with vehicular access from an alley and described the various benefits of this type of layout. She also noted that the trail connection shown on the previous version was adjusted to illustrate direct access to the commercial area. Ms. Howard discussed the area proposed for rezoning and discussed the remaining issue of the concept plan’s elimination of the one east-west connection to Cedar Heights Drive. She noted that collector street connections should be provided at least every ¼ mile. Staff’s recommendation is against the elimination of the connection, which is shown in the 2015 master plan. She noted a number of reasons that it was important to provide an east-west street connection from the larger neighborhood to Cedar Heights Drive, noting that there is not a connection for 4000 feet. She noted staff concerns about long term implications for traffic circulation, including for emergency services. She noted that one way to provide that connection is to eliminate the cul-de-sac (labeled “Court A” on the concept plan) extending it to the east to connect with Cedar Heights Drive. Although she noted that staff is open to other options for creating that east-west connection.

Staff finds that the proposed increase in development density is acceptable as long as

adequate street access is provided and parking and open space amenities are provided to create high quality living environment for future residents. She noted that the City is making improvements to Cedar Heights Drive. The improvement plans provide an option for a future roundabout at Huntington Drive, which would allow that street to be extended to the west to serve the commercial area and would be another potential option for an east-west street connection to the neighborhood. Ms. Howard discussed the technical comments from the last meeting and discussed the changes the developer has proposed since that time. She explained that the developer has provided a concept plan for the reconfiguration of the Goldenrod street stub into a trail head, as well as for landscaping amenities in the Prairie Parkway/Prairie View roundabout. Construction of these improvements will be addressed in the development agreement. Staff also recommends that prior to approval of the rezoning, the owner pay funds into an escrow equivalent to the costs of the improvements. A new developmental procedures agreement will need to be drafted and signed prior to setting a public hearing at City Council for the rezoning request. She summarized the staff recommendation. Staff recommends approval of the land use map amendment, but recommends denial of the rezoning request because the proposed update to the master plan eliminates the east-west street connection to Cedar Heights Drive.

Mike Schoppe (Schoppe Design Associates) and Carrie Hansen (Schoppe Design Associates) were in attendance to answer questions and provide information. Mr. Schoppe gave a brief explanation of the project and the reason it was planned the way it was.

Ms. Hansen also spoke to the history of the project and how it came about, as well as the timeline of the proposal. She explained that they have met via zoom with residents in the area to discuss the project and answer any questions, and noted that there has been a significant amount of progress since January.

Daniel Fencil (resident) stated that there was a good discussion with Ms. Hansen regarding the proposal, but the residents still have concerns with attaching a street from the new development on Cedar Heights Drive to the cul-de-sac. They feel it would aggravate traffic issues and create safety issues for children in the neighborhood attending the local school. He asked the city to consider a multi-lane roundabout on Cedar Heights and Greenhill Road. Mr. Schoppe responded to Mr. Fencil's concerns and explained how they are proposing to address them. He also discussed the floodplain and the drainage in the area and how it affects the project.

Mr. Schrad asked how long it will be before Cedar Heights becomes four lanes and if we really want to have another road coming on to Cedar Heights if it has the four lanes? Ms. Howard explained the general improvements planned for the street project, but noted that street connections to the arterial street network are essential for good traffic circulation in the neighborhood. She also explained that if there is not an east-west connection provided as the Pinnacle Prairie neighborhood builds out, all the traffic would have to flow to existing routes including Rownd Street, which is the street that the neighborhood expressed concerns about. An additional street connection should help distribute the traffic so that the existing routes do not become overburdened.

Mr. Larson explained why he felt it wouldn't be an issue to approve the map amendment and the zoning at this time and felt the street issue could be resolved later. Mr. Holst disagreed and noted that if the rezoning is approved without the east-west street connection shown in the master plan, the area could be developed without it. He emphasized that this is the time to address the issue at the master plan stage. He asked Howard to confirm. She confirmed his assessment.

Mr. Larson made a motion to approve the land use map amendment. Mr. Hartley seconded

the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 8 ayes (Hartley, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux, Saul and Schrad), and 0 nays.

Mr. Schrad made a motion to approve the rezoning request. Ms. Saul seconded the motion. There was further discussion regarding street connections and issues at hand. Mr. Schrad withdrew his motion. After further discussion, Mr. Schrad then made a motion to deny the rezoning request. Ms. Prideaux seconded the motion. The motion was withdrawn as motions have to be made in the affirmative.

Larson noted his opinion that the road connection was not necessary and would be difficult to achieve. Holst noted his disagreement and made various points in that regard. Prideaux expressed her thoughts about why the street connection is important. Mr. Leeper expressed conflicting feelings about it because of the need to cross Green Creek and said it was a difficult decision.

The Commission discussed the option of giving the developer more time to resolve the issue by continuing the hearing. Mr. Larson moved to continue the hearing to the next meeting. The Commission asked Mr. Schoppe if continuing the hearing would provide the additional time needed to work toward a solution on the road connection issue. Mr. Schoppe said that he didn't think that the owner would change their proposal even if given more time. Mr. Larson withdrew his motion to continue the hearing.

After further discussion, Mr. Larson moved to approve the rezoning request. Mr. Hartley seconded the motion. The motion was denied with 4 ayes (Larson, Leeper, Saul and Schrad) and 4 nays (Hartley, Holst, Lynch and Prideaux).

- 4.) The Commission then considered a Central Business District Overlay Design Review for NRG Pilates. Chair Holst introduced the item and Mr. Atodaria provided background information. He explained that the building is located at southeast corner of the Washington Street and W. 5th Street and a request has been made to add new projecting awnings and a projecting sign over the public sidewalk advertising the new business "N.R.G. Pilates." Mr. Atodaria discussed the details regarding the projection distance, area of sign, size of awning and the clear height distance that will be maintained as per the city code. Mr. Atodaria stated that the sign meets the standards and recommended approval.

Mason Fromm, from the sign company who submitted the application, encouraged support for the sign.

Mr. Holst mentioned that the proposal looks very good. Adding to the comment, Ms. Saul mentioned that she is excited about the new business.

Ms. Saul made a motion to approve the item. Mr. Larson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 8 ayes (Hartley, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux, Saul and Schrad), and 0 nays.

- 5.) The next item of business was a rezoning request from R-4 Multiple Residence District to C-3 Commercial District at 2128 College Street. Chair Holst introduced the item and Mr. Weintraut provided background information. He explained that the proposal is to rezone the property at 2128 College Street (Bani's) from R-4, Multiple Residence District and C-3 Commercial District to C-3, Commercial District. He explained that the lot currently has split zoning. The request was submitted to move the zoning boundary so that the entirety of the lot is zoned C-3. The split zoning makes it difficult for any redevelopment to occur on the site. The request is

consistent with the Future Land Use Map and would encourage bringing mixed-use development to the area and link the Upper and Lower Hill, which is noted as a goal in the Comprehensive Plan. All public services are accessible and it has access to street network, although he noted that the excessively wide curb cuts are nonconforming and inconsistent with the desired pedestrian-oriented character of the area, so noted that if redeveloped these curb cuts may need to be modified. He displayed photos of the Bani's site and discussed the changes that the rezoning could create. Staff recommends gathering comments from the Planning and Zoning Commission and the public and scheduling a date for a public hearing.

Dan Levi (Levi Architecture) stated that the owner is making the request because there has been discussion about redevelopment of this prominent corner to be in compliance with the overall vision for the College Hill District.

Kathryn Sogard (College Hill Partnership) read a letter of support for the rezoning of the property on behalf of the College Hill Partnership.

Mr. Holst stated that he feels that it is a pretty straightforward project to clean up an existing inconsistency in the zoning.

The item was continued to the next meeting for public hearing.

- 6.) Commission Updates: Ms. Howard noted that the next Planning and Zoning meeting would be in a hybrid format and conducted in person and via Zoom. Mr. Weintraut briefly discussed the Resilience Plan and upcoming meetings.

As there were no further comments, Mr. Larson made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Schrad seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 8 ayes (Hartley, Holst, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Prideaux, Saul and Schrad), and 0 nays.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Karen Howard
Community Services Manager


Joanne Goodrich
Administrative Assistant