

**Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission  
Special Work Session  
March 10, 2021  
Via Videoconference  
Cedar Falls, Iowa**

**MINUTES**

The Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission met in special work session on March 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in person and via videoconference due to precautions necessary to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The following Commission members were present: Hartley, Larson, Leeper, Lynch, Saul, Schrad and Sears. Ms. Saul arrived via zoom later in the meeting. Holst and Prideaux were absent. Karen Howard, Planning and Community Services Manager, Michelle Pezley, Planner III and Chris Sevy, Planner I, were also present.

Chair Leeper called the special meeting to order and opened up the discussion of public realm standards. Ms. Howard clarified the purpose of the meeting, that it is an opportunity for the Commission to request more information or suggest edits to the document. Leeper asked if references to other non-zoning city code standards such as street furniture have been settled. Ms. Howard explained that because a large portion of the public realm, as defined in this code, is the city-owned public right of way, there are other parts of City Code that apply. This code then cross-references or notes that other standards apply. For instance, the downtown has an adopted streetscape plan where any proposed furniture in downtown would have to meet the standards of that adopted plan. Standards for street trees will apply as well.

Chair Leeper asked Ms. Madden and Mr. Ferrell (the consultants) what issues they typically see or what options they think the Commission should be discussing. Mr. Ferrell explained that these standards are dealing with the area between the face of the building and the curb and issues usually come from coordination problems between departments at the city. That isn't the case here as they discussed these standards with the city arborist, with Karen Howard, and the landscape architect who designed the update to the streetscaping along the downtown parkade. Ms. Madden also explained that in an urban setting such as downtown the focus of landscaping standards should be on the public realm where the most public benefit is had from the dollars spent as opposed to focus on planting requirements in the interior of lots. Leeper asked if all planting standards are consistent across all frontage areas within the downtown code. Mr. Ferrell indicated that yes they are but explained that in the neighborhood areas there are front yard areas (dooryards) and tree lawns between the sidewalk and the street curb and typically planted, not hardscaped. Nevertheless the standards for all frontage areas still focus their effect on the street. Ms. Madden referred to page 72 and explained that continuous planted tree lawns are required between the sidewalk and the curb in neighborhood areas as opposed to pavers that we see in the center of town. Mr. Ferrell pointed out that the code offers both of those as options depending on the level of pedestrian activity.

Chair Leeper turned the conversation to parking and requested more feedback from the consultants about the two mindsets of either not having enough or having too much. How do we address both sides? Mr. Ferrell agreed that it is a hard problem that is often political in nature. He explained that at a certain level of intensity parking can get in the way as it keeps destinations further apart. There comes a point when most trips are more convenient on foot than by car, but until you are there it will be a process getting consensus. Ms. Madden

explained that they initially advocated even lower parking requirements but have moved to a middle ground in this draft. As envisioned in the Downtown Plan, the downtown area should be a “park once” environment. Shared parking is the key for an area to function properly. Private sector parking is often the most detrimental as it yields empty lots that are unavailable to others for large portions of the day. Shared parking that all can use is the best route to go. This code proposes to reduce the requirements for reserved on-site parking and introduces the concept of a shared parking requirement for both residential and new office space. She also discussed mismatches where code requires one parking space per bedroom and families that may not have one car per bedroom in their household resulting in unused parking spaces that people are paying for. The market tends to do a good job of correcting when there is not a strict requirement imposed. Ms. Howard explained that the parking study looked at peak times and found that residential parking was oversupplied. The recommendation of the study was to right-size private lot parking requirements but take a balanced shared parking approach for public parking.

Chair Leeper requested that the parking study be sent to the commission members and asked how the new code would impact existing private properties. Ms. Howard confirmed that the new code would allow existing buildings along the Main Street parkade to be re-used without providing additional parking. She also confirmed that properties with excess private, off-street parking may have potential for further development or redevelopment with the new code. Ms. Madden pointed out on page 77 that properties on the parkade are exempt from minimum parking standards. Also, for the Urban General frontage areas, if they have an existing commercial building and are not adding residential they are also exempt. However, if they are adding residential they would need to figure out a reserved parking arrangement. Shared parking requirements are not required to be on-site as per item 5 on page 78, but located within walking distance. If necessary, reserved parking can be on an adjacent lot and shared parking can be a couple blocks away.

Chair Leeper asked if there was any further discussion about previous sections. Ms. Howard also asked if there were any proposed changes or updates that commission members would like to suggest. Mr. Larson expressed that he feels strongly that properties at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Franklin be incorporated into the General Urban 2 District so as to incorporate the area around Overman Park. Ms. Howard and the consultants will come back with an analysis of that request.

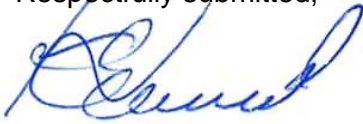
Mr. Larson indicated that he believes it makes sense for the Commission to review some proposals if they are significant. Chair Leeper concurred but asked how we might define a “significant project.” Larson suggested several factors: proximity to the core of downtown, % improvement in dollars spent, size of the building, and size of the site. He then asked if the consultants had any suggestions. Mr. Ferrell cautioned opening up the code for requests for variation to the standards. A decision left to a board or commission gives architects or developers the opportunity to sell the project in order to get leeway with code requirements. The code should be clear what requirements could have leeway in a review and which are strict requirements. Mr. Larson then asked at what point something becomes a variance and what qualifies as leeway. If there is a disagreement, under what circumstance might an applicant take their proposal to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council as they do now? Chair Leeper and Mr. Larson clarified that they are looking for some scenarios and advice from the consultants for the best approach based on what they have seen elsewhere. Ms. Madden clarified that variances have well-defined legal standards that need to be followed. The approach of this code should consider how common it is for the Board of Adjustment to hand out variances.

Mr. Larson commented that parking requirements look on the lean side but he thinks the minimum requirements look great and are well thought out. Mr. Hartley commented that he thinks it is too lean and maybe should be a little more aggressive. Mr. Larson then cited College Square Mall and explained that undersupplied is better than oversupplied.

Ms. Howard invited the commission members to reach out to her if they have a question or issue they would like considered. She also expressed appreciation to the Commission for their work in reviewing the proposed code.

Ms. Sears motioned to adjourn, Mr. Larson seconded. Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Howard  
Planning & Community Services Manager



Chris Sevy  
Planner I