

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes
August 2, 2018
FINAL

Second Floor, City Hall
Commission Chambers
241W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Members Present: Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Chair; Gregory Milliken, Vice Chair; Sakhi Vyas; Derek Wissner; Charley Coss; Jack Baartman; James Pitts

Members Excused: Alfonso Espinosa; Emily Greenman Wright

City Staff: Christina Anderson, City Planner; Robert Bauckham, Senior Development Planner; Clyde Robinson, City Attorney; and Beth Cheeseman, Code Administration Clerk/Cashier

A. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Planner Anderson proceeded with roll call and determined that the aforementioned members were present.

C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Commissioner Vyas, supported by Commissioner Baartman, moved approval of the August 2, 2018 Planning Commission agenda. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Coss, supported by Commissioner Wissner, moved approval of the July 19, 2018 Planning Commission minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS

P.C. #2018.12: Request from the Community Planning & Economic Development Department to approve the 2018 Northside Neighborhood Plan as a sub plan and an

amendment to the 2025 Master Plan. [Recommendation: motion to approve the request, and recommend to the City Commission to affirm the approval.]

Christina Anderson gave an introduction of the proposed Northside Neighborhood Plan. She stated the creation of such neighborhood plans are noted in the Master Plan as an important action step for the City in implementing the principles of Imagine Kalamazoo and the Strategic Vision. Staff is using that lens to look at each neighborhood in the City. The first plan in this process is from the Northside neighborhood. She indicated this plan will be different than some coming up because the Northside neighborhood has done many planning efforts over the last few years and their plan builds on these previous efforts.

Mattie Jordan-Woods, Executive Director, Northside Association for Community Development (NACD), gave a presentation outlining the Northside Neighborhood Plan to the Commissioners. She also presented an overview of the history of the NACD and the makeup of the NACD Board. Ms. Jordan-Woods said they have done other neighborhood planning efforts in 2005, 2009 and 2015. She stated that many of the same issues kept coming up in each planning effort, and there were no financial resources to put toward implementation of the plans. One thing they discovered through this process was that portions of their neighborhood are zoned in a way that would cause residents to be unable to rebuild their homes if they were severely damaged in a fire. She said their planning strategies are helping to ensure that people who want to remain in their neighborhood can do so.

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson opened the public comments portion of the public hearing.

Mr. Aquile Jordan, Ms. Kenaujene Shepherd-Friday and Ms. Ke'aujanaa Shepherd-Friday each stated they plan to own businesses in the Northside community. They indicated that with a little support and a little push, they can accomplish that goal.

Ms. Kamaria Hampton-Friday came forward and talked about her brother who would like to own his own technology business. She said he is good with fixing things. She said he is currently attending KVCC studying film production. She is in support of the plan.

Ms. Gwendolyn Hooker, Resident and Northside business owner, came forward in support of the plan. She said if there could be an agreement to promote Northside businesses and make it equitable for everyone, it would increase the economy and eliminate the stigma associated with living on the Northside. She strongly urged Commissioners to support the proposal as well as any that come along later. Ms. Hooker said several people have been helped by the small business development courses offered through the NACD. She believes if this is supported and promoted by the City, it will be valuable to the citizens on the Northside and the City as a whole.

Ms. Mildred Smith, Chair of NACD and a Northside resident, asked the Commissioners to approve the request as well as to recommend it to the City Commission. She said their belief and investment in the plan will bring about results. Ms. Smith cited recent results in business development, new housing, and a renewed sense of community and community identity in the neighborhood. She also said it would result in a tangible vision for youth where they see all is possible.

Mr. Ricky Thrash, resident and business owner, said he is looking forward for it to be approved. He spoke about a salon he owns and that he is waiting on the City to approve a new outdoor café he is working on. He desires to help make the Northside and business district beautiful. Mr. Thrash said the proposed site of the café is a distressed piece of land the City owns. He wants to make it beautiful. He said he looks forward to sitting out there when it is complete and looking at the beautiful city.

Mr. James Lipsey indicated he grew up on the northside and moved back to Kalamazoo about three years ago. He said Ms. Jordan-Woods allowed him to work with her at the NACD. Since that he has implemented a business expo, helped work with kids for a new literacy park, and helped develop the Business Plan Training Center. Mr. Lipsey said he and Ms. Jordan-Woods have worked together through a lot of different things. He views this as an opportunity to transform the community. Mr. Lipsey believes if they are able to move forward, it will have a major impact on the community as a whole and especially the Northside.

Commissioner Vyas, supported by Commissioner Pitts, motioned to close the public comment portion of the hearing. A voice vote was taken and passed.

Commissioner Wissner asked staff to address the zoning change referenced by the applicant.

Planner Anderson responded that staff plans to address zoning standards on the Northside. Several blocks are used for active residential uses, but are zoned either commercial or manufacturing which is not appropriate for the area. She stated the second piece staff will look at is the main corridors within the Northside Cultural Business District and making sure the zoning standards allow a flexible use of businesses.

Commissioner Wissner asked if there was any conflict between the City and the Northside neighborhood regarding desired zoning. Planner Anderson and Ms. Jordan-Woods agreed there was no conflict in the desired zoning. Both the City and the Neighborhood desire to have the area rezoned.

Commissioner Milliken stated that when zoning requests come in, they use the Master Plan as their guideline. He inquired if they should now be using the maps in the neighborhood plan instead. Planner Anderson stated that Commissioners should use the information in the Master Plan and also reference the Neighborhood Plan. The two documents should not be in conflict. She said if there is some conflict, there will be language included for further clarification.

Commissioner Coss said the plan is thorough, but he noticed the Strategic Vision goal of Good Governance was not checked. He suggested that be changed because the plan is so comprehensive. Planner Anderson and Ms. Jordan-Woods expressed no objections to the change.

Commissioner Pitts, with support from Commissioner Wissner, moved to approve the request from the Community Planning & Economic Development Department to approve the 2018

Northside Neighborhood Plan and amendment to the 2025 Master Plan, and to recommend to the City Commission to affirm the approval.

Commissioner Coss stated that in the past there have been communication issues with neighborhoods. He said the City and neighborhoods are doing a great job in working the process and making sure that loop is closed.

Commissioner Milliken said he loves the enthusiasm and engagement and seeing everyone at the meeting tonight. He said he loved the discussion and hopes they don't have to have it again - as it sounds like they've had it several times in the past. He encouraged everyone to stay engaged in this process and stay focused on the immediate action items.

Commissioner Vyas said she was terribly proud of how thorough and well thought out this plan is. This Neighborhood Association has set a phenomenal example for other neighborhoods.

Commissioner Pitts stated he said he watched everyone work really hard with the City to put this plan together. He was proud to see how people showed up for it. He also encouraged the young people who would like to start businesses on the Northside to stay engaged and keep striving. He believes they will find freedom and independence in doing so.

A roll call vote was taken and the request was unanimously approved.

Planner Anderson stated that this will go to the first City Commission meeting in September, which will be Tuesday the 4th. That meeting is one day later than normal due to the holiday. She also stated that the public hearing for the creation of the Northside Cultural Business District Authority will also take place at that meeting. She encouraged everyone to come out and express support as it is one of the first actions specified in the new plan.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

H. NEW BUSINESS

None

I. CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Regarding non-agenda items)

Mr. Markus Johnson, President of Young Kings and Queens Inc, came forward to speak. He brought up a couple of different issues he sees in Kalamazoo. He stated that there are a lot of people who work in the city that do not get taxed like those who live in the city. He said these people get their pay from employers within the city, but pay taxes somewhere else. He also cited certain repairs that are needed in

Kalamazoo. Mr. Johnson also said other residents have complained to him that there is not one speed sign on Rose Street.

Planner Anderson said she will bring up the speed sign issue at the next traffic board meeting.

Commissioner Coss encouraged Mr. Johnson to address the difference in property/ income tax with the City Commission.

J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

None

K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Bauckham presented the recent updates to the site plan review spreadsheet. They have added columns regarding the pre-application process and the design review. There have been 30 site plan projects so far this year. Number 30 is a small addition to the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission.

Planner Bauckham highlighted the following projects.

- Lot 9 Project on N. Edwards Street – recently approved and will begin in near future.
- 400 Rose project at Lovell and Rose Streets – approved and there have been several meetings on construction scheduling and work in the ROW.
- Midtown Market project on S, Howard Street – the grocery store opening is imminent. They are continuing to complete site and building improvements.
- Several projects under construction were identified: new building for the Vine Shops on S. Westnedge Avenue, new building for Carriage Green Apartments on W. Main, Walden Woods Phase IV work on Arboretum Parkway, Parkway Flats Apartments on Arboretum Parkway, the Exchange Building work is commencing on the ninth floor of the structure.

He stated there are 14 pre-applications for site plan projects in various stages of review.

Planner Bauckham indicated there will be two requests for the special meeting on August 21st. One request is for the rezoning of a portion of 333 E. Alcott to allow a residential use. The second request is for an official affirmation that 925 Grant, owned by Parks & Recreation Department, is not a park.

Planner Anderson said they are thinking the rezoning request for the Northside neighborhood in connection with the Neighborhood Plan will likely be at the September meeting. Commissioner Milliken asked if this will be a rezoning or written zoning standards. Planner Anderson told him that it is both. There will be a text amendment to the zoning code to add some new districts, and a rezoning of certain properties to the new districts. Commissioner Milliken expressed some concern about reviewing written code and map applications in the same meeting. Planner Anderson stated that the Commission would not necessarily have to act on the requests at that meeting. She said staff doesn't take this situation lightly. There was a lot of time spent reviewing the existing land uses, and testing the new district regulations. Planner Anderson said they can either table action or split the request into two pieces. They could vote on the text amendment at the September meeting and not on the rezoning.

L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Coss stated that he works with the City as an election inspector. He said they are always looking for more poll workers and November will be a big election. Commissioner Coss encouraged people to check with the Clerk's office to volunteer.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Vyas, moved to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Christina Anderson", is written over a horizontal blue line.

Christina Anderson,
City Planner
Community Planning & Development