

City of Kalamazoo
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes
September 6, 2018
FINAL

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

Members Present: Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Chair; Gregory Milliken, Vice Chair; Derek Wissner; Jack Baartman; James Pitts; Alfonso Espinosa; Emily Greenman Wright

Members Excused: Charley Coss; Sakhi Vyas

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 7:05 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL

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

C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

Planner Anderson noted that minutes from August 21, 2018 and minutes from the September 6, 2018 meeting will be voted on at the October 4, 2018 meeting.

Commissioner Greenman Wright, supported by Commissioner Wissner, moved approval of the September 6, 2018 Planning Commission agenda as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS

P.C. #2018.15: Request from PlazaCorp Realty Advisors, Inc. to vacate Scudder Court between E. Frank Street and E. Parsons Street. **[Recommendation: motion to recommend to the City Commission to approve the street vacation with one condition.]**

Planner Bauckham presented the staff report and reviewed site maps and photos. He noted the Court is currently open for vehicular traffic. The applicant owns the parcels to the west of the Court and the land to the east is owned by the Norfolk Southern Railroad Company. The applicant would like to vacate the entire Court and combine it with their property to create a parking lot. They are renovating their building at 225 Parsons Street and will be adding uses to it. Planner Bauckham reported that the existing parking for the building is not sufficient for the additional uses. The proposed parking lot will address this need. The applicant will go through the site plan review process if the request is approved. PlazaCorp Realty Advisors are working with the Norfolk Railroad Company to see if they are interested in obtaining the east half of Scudder Court. If the request is approved, the Public Services Department has requested that the utilities under the Court be abandoned by the applicant. Planner Bauckham said the fair market value of the property is \$5,385. This amount would be paid to the City if the vacation is approved. Notices of the public hearing were sent out and the director of the Northside neighborhood had no objections to the request. The vacation request meets the City Street Vacation Policy and meets the Economic Vitality goal of the Strategic Vision of the City for growing businesses and stabilizing the local economy. The City staff recommends the Planning Commission recommend to the City Commission to approve the street vacation with the condition that public utilities would be abandoned by the applicant.

Mr. Andy Wenzel, PlazaCorp Realty Advisors, and Mr. Bill Laditka, Intercept Architects, came forward to speak regarding the street vacation request and the plan for expansion and redevelopment of the historically known Gibson Guitar factory. Mr. Wenzel gave an overview of the project (the building will be ~140,000 sq. ft.). The plan includes the continued operation and expansion of the current Heritage Guitar factory in the building and the continued operation of Forensic Fluids. New uses will include a boutique hotel, a finishing area for Heritage Guitar, and a Learning Center to build musical instruments. There will be a restaurant with a small outdoor area, and a museum centered on the history of guitar making and other historical facts of Kalamazoo related to music. Other spaces will be set aside for retailers and/or office space. They also have a plan in place for a music venue. In light of all of the additional uses, Mr. Wenzel reported that they will need expanded parking. He emphasized they would like to make it a connectivity piece to the downtown with a walkable, non-motorized connection to the trail way on Kalamazoo Avenue. Mr. Wenzel said they conducted some additional outreach to the neighbors and circulated a letter to present their plans. They reportedly had good response from the neighbors. He stated there is an agreement in place to share the southern portion of the new parking lot with the current coffee shop.

Mr. Laditka stated that the road is more of an alley way. He emphasized the connection to downtown is only about a 10-14 minute walk. They are trying to minimize vehicular access and celebrate the pedestrian access to the site.

Commissioner Wissner asked how traffic would be slowed across Parsons Street for pedestrians. Mr. Laditka said a speed bump will be installed there to slow traffic.

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

No one came forward.

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

Planner Anderson reported that the pedestrian speed bump mentioned will be reviewed during the site plan process.

Commissioner Espinosa inquired what will happen if the railroad company doesn't respond about purchasing their portion of Scudder Court. Planner Anderson responded that if they don't wish to purchase their half of the property, the applicant would have the opportunity to purchase the complete property.

Commissioner Wissner, with support from Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved to recommend to the City Commission to approve the street vacation with the condition of the underground utilities being abandoned by the applicant.

Commissioner Wissner stated that it looks like a solid plan and is well supported.

Commissioner Milliken asked about the utilities that will be abandoned. Planner Bauckham said that it includes a sanitary sewer and water line. He stated the City no longer has a need for them and requested they be abandoned.

Commissioner Milliken noted that the request is consistent with the City Street Vacation policy and the Master Plan goal of Economic Vitality.

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

P.C. #2018.16: Request from the Community Planning & Economic Development Department for a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to add three new zoning districts; Live-Work 1, Live-Work 2, and Node. **[Recommendation: postpone action to the October 4 meeting.]**

and

P.C. #2018.17: Request from the Community Planning & Economic Development Department to rezone multiple parcels in the Northside neighborhood from Commercial, Community (CC), Commercial, Neighborhood (CN1), and Manufacturing, Limited (M1) to the new Live-Work 1, Live-Work 2, and Node zoning districts to make the current uses conforming. **[Recommendation: postpone action to the October 4 meeting.]**

Planner Anderson stated that she would give a detailed presentation, but some pieces of the draft language are still in flux and there is a possibility of some additional parcels being added to the request. She requested the Commissioners to postpone action on the requests until the October 4 meeting.

Planner Anderson gave a staff report on P.C. #2018.16 and P.C. #2018.17. She reported that zoning changes are needed in this area to support the vision in the Master Plan. The Northside Neighborhood has recently completed their Neighborhood Plan. She said the zoning district changes support two strategies in that neighborhood plan: increase the number of businesses in town, and; preserve existing housing and build new housing to accommodate all housing needs. Planner Anderson reviewed how the current zoning doesn't support the Northside's vision for commercial activities or housing needs.

Planner Anderson reported that for P.C. # 2018.16 there is a proposal for three new zoning districts. This will be a text amendment and a map change. For P.C. # 2018.17, they are looking at some of the blocks and lots that are adjacent to the Northside Cultural Business District that are not included in the mixed-use zoning districts, but are recognized as not having the correct zoning. This will be a rezoning – a map change.

Planner Anderson said that during the Imagine Kalamazoo planning process, it was brought up that whole blocks and lots that include residential uses are currently zoned Community Commercial, Manufacturing or Neighborhood Commercial. Those districts aren't meant to be strictly for residential uses, and the manufacturing district doesn't allow residential at all. Many of the residential uses are legal non-conforming. The zoning changes are meant to help preserve the existing housing.

Part two is a proposal for three new zoning districts to support the vision of the Northside Neighborhood. The first new district is the Node District. This district creates a set of standards to make sure this area is walkable – with retail and commercial uses on first floors. Upper floors of buildings would be more flexible with commercial or residential uses. Planner Anderson explained this limits how driveways are located promoting as much pedestrian activity as possible. She said the Node District works to make sure there is a clear primary entrance on the front of buildings with appropriate transparency (window space to wall space).

The second district is called Live-Work 1. This would be a flexible, mixed-use district allowing commercial, residential and maker spaces (limited production and sales). This district will allow single family homes – bringing non-conforming homes back into compliance.

The third district is Live-Work 2 and is also a flexible, mixed-use district allowing commercial, maker spaces, residential, and very limited industrial uses. It includes regulations for garage bays, and limits on outdoor storage and how it is screened.

Planner Anderson talked about what is included in the proposed new zoning regulations document. Included in the document are the following: How to use the document; General Zoning Provisions; Zoning Districts; Uses (table, definitions, illustrations); Accessory Uses & Structures (food trucks, gardens, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)); and Lot types (Flex, Civic, Warehouse, Yard, Outdoor Market). She noted the new zoning allows some amount of agriculture – up to a certain size; an outdoor

market lot type; and it allows a commercial use to count some on-street parking toward parking requirements. There are also provisions for food trucks and/or pop-up shops.

Planner Anderson summarized the outreach and engagement activities that were conducted related to the proposed zoning districts and change in zoning.

Commissioner Espinosa asked about the time lapse between zoning updates. Planner Anderson said they are not updated frequently. She clarified the last update was done in 2005 and that zoning is typically slow to catch up with the vision. Planner Anderson said they recognized they have already had two Master Plans and will soon have a variety of neighborhood plans.

Commissioner Espinosa asked for clarification of the agricultural uses allowed in Live Work 2. Planner Anderson shared that it would mean allowing a lot to be used for growing purposes. She said they are not looking for full block activities for growing, and there will be a maximum size allowed. Commissioner Espinosa said he believes they will need to clarify what agriculture means in terms of what people can grow, if it means an outdoor or inside space, and if they can have chickens and goats. Planner Anderson stated the zoning code does clarify much of that, and they are looking for very small farms. She added that it is a good point to clarify that this would not be a livestock area.

Commissioner Espinosa asked for clarification if the code will be updated for part of the City or the whole City. Planner Anderson said the new districts will be added to the zoning code. At this time they would only be mapping the changes to the Northside. She said it is accurate to say the new districts could be used in other areas, but that would require a request for a rezoning.

Commissioner Milliken asked if the code would be written so it can be applied to anywhere in the City. Planner Anderson confirmed the code can be applied to other areas of the City, however, it was drafted for the Northside specifically.

Commissioner Milliken asked if the proposed accessory uses would only be applied to the Northside neighborhood. Planner Anderson stated that the code only applies to the three new districts - Node, Live Work 1, and Live Work 2, and the current rezoning request was for a portion of the Northside neighborhood. Commissioner Milliken said he believed this would be a point of contention when other neighborhoods see it allowed on the Northside and they need to be prepared for additional requests in their neighborhoods. Planner Anderson assured him that they will be looking at the code overall.

Commissioner Wissner wondered about the agriculture rules in light of a possible recreational marijuana vote coming up. Planner Anderson responded that there are certain locations and districts where grow operations are allowed in the City. The proposed district do not allow such operations. She said she can add language to confirm that situation.

Commissioner Baartman asked if there is a minimum size proposed in the new zoning districts for single-family homes. Planner Anderson responded in the affirmative and stated such uses must be appropriate for the area. Commissioner Baartman noted that the proposed changes may make it easier for neighbors

to start businesses at their homes. Planner Anderson confirmed that the zoning code will support business in the appropriate areas. Commissioner Espinosa asked if the City will be more flexible when people request allowance for home occupations. Planner Anderson stated that if something is not allowed in the zoning for an area, the applicant can always request a variance or an administrative appeal process.

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

Ms. Mattie Jordan-Woods, Director of the Northside Association for Community Development, came forward and asked the Commissioners to postpone the recommendation. She stated that one parcel (1505 N. Burdick Street) was left out of the notices for rezoning. She said it is part of the Northside Cultural Business District. It contains a 16,000-square-foot building that is in the middle of a single-family residential only area. She stated it needs to be included as a Live Work space. The Northside Cultural Business District Authority boundaries stopped at E. Frank Street instead of going on Prouty, N. Burdick and N. Westnedge. Second, the map shows 512 N. Park, 612 N. Park, and 622 N. Park in the Node District. Ms. Jordan-Woods said restrictions in the Node District would stop the development identified in the Master Plan for these parcels for the hydroponic farm/entrepreneurs market. She said they need that to be designated as a Live Work space. Ms. Jordan-Woods reminded the Commissioners that these are things the residents voted on for each of the neighborhood plans created. She said there are funds available now to proceed with the market. She requested the Commissioners to postpone the vote so those minor things can be corrected to reflect what the residents have asked for since 2009.

Ms. Gwendolyn Hooker, Northside resident and business owner, also came forward. She confirmed the NACD is driven by residents and has been for 40 years. Ms. Hooker said the items Ms. Jordan-Woods talked about are important and directly relate to work they have done for many years. She mentioned items that need to be allowed in the neighborhood such as having a hair salon in the house or babysitting services. Ms. Hooker said she is in favor of postponing the vote, but recommends the Commissioners support the zoning changes so they can create and follow the dreams to support the neighborhood and see change in the City.

Mr. Nathaniel Johnson, Minister of Pentecostal Church, said he has paid about 45 years of tax payments to the City and has had hard struggles in this neighborhood. He said he understood his property was residential when he bought it and now he has been told he would not be able to rebuild it if something happened to his property. Mr. Johnson said he was horrified to find out that if his house burns down he would not be able to rebuild it. He asked the Commissioners to strongly consider the needs of families – they are real people like yourself.

Ms. Norine Wafford, resident, said she loves her neighborhood and the people there. She said she does what she can do to make the neighborhood look better. Ms. Wafford expressed a desire to begin a business in her home. She asked Commissioners to rezone it however is needed so she can continue to thrive, and provide a place for her children and grandchildren. Ms. Wafford urged them to stand up for our future – help us to help our children to help our city.

Mr. Chad Dodd, resident, spoke about the NACD, saying he learned a lot about the community of Kalamazoo from Building Blocks with Ms. Mattie Jordan-Woods. He received a first-hand glance of the neighbors and who does what in the City of Kalamazoo. He said they need a lot more programs for youth on the Northside. He said he has seen Ms. Jordan-Woods always educating kids. Mr. Dodd also shared that he encourages friends to invest back into the community to have something to leave to their families.

Commissioner Milliken, with support from Commissioner Pitts, moved that both public hearings for the text amendments and rezoning be recessed and continued to the October 4 meeting. A roll call vote was taken and the request was unanimously approved.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

H. NEW BUSINESS

None

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

None

J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS

None

K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Bauckham presented an overview of site plans currently in process. New projects include: a project for a new apartment complex at 333 E. Alcott Street; a mixed-use building on E. Ransom and Harrison; and a use change of an existing building on N. Sage Street.

He also reviewed the progress on the following projects:

- 1101 Portage Street – New mixed-use building under review
- Bow in the Clouds Nature Preserve - Plan was approved for new trails and an overlook
- Kalamazoo Gospel Mission – plan in for a new entrance addition and planning a partial replacement of the north building on the site
- Eastside small homes project – under construction
- Lot 9 mixed-use building project south of Arcadia Festival Creek site – under construction
- 400 Rose – mixed-use building under construction
- Newell Rubbermaid addition – recently approved
- Bronson Hospitality House on S. Burdick – under construction

- Midtown Market Place on Howard – grocery store is open – continuing to work on the site
- Exchange Building on E. Michigan – working on the 12th floor - scheduled for completion by the end of next year

There are 17 pre-application projects in various stages of review.

Planner Bauckham said at the October 4 meeting there will be a request for a daycare special use permit, there will be a continuation of hearings from tonight, and possibly review of the Vine and Eastside Neighborhood plans.

L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Baartman attended the City Commissioners meeting on Tuesday and said it became pretty heated regarding the homeless situation. During the meeting, it was brought up there needs to be more low-income housing in the City. Commissioner Baartman stated the Planning Commission reviewed a number of those types of projects since he has been a Commissioner. He wondered if there is a better way to communicate to the community what they are doing to help people with addiction or who are low income. Commissioner Baartman stated they've done some great things and he thinks they need to do a better job of broadcasting those efforts.

Planner Anderson said the City's Planning Division tries very hard to get the word out on upcoming City meetings, neighborhood meetings, and celebrating great accomplishments in the community. She said they recognize that getting the message out and sharing stories is a challenge and they try to advertise any way they can including thorough meetings, social media, and fliers.

Commissioner Milliken suggested there are key performance indicators they could be tracking, such as the number of affordable living units that have been created in the last year and sharing that information with the public.

Commissioner Greenman Wright stated that the City Commissioners are really the public face that residents interact with the most. She said they have so much to remember and do, it would be difficult for them to represent all of the work the Planning Commissioners are doing. She also noted that people have a lot of misunderstanding of how Federal funding works. The parameters on how the money can be used is complicated. She and Commissioner Baartman agreed it is a major messaging issue and a matter of perception.

Commissioner Wissner expressed frustration that they do things that promote low-income housing at the meetings and yet the news reports that the City of Kalamazoo doesn't care about their homeless population.

Commissioner Milliken congratulated Planner Anderson on her work on the zoning ordinance and stated he is glad they are taking an extra month with this request. Commissioner Greenman Wright said she can't wait to see it applied in similar areas.

Planner Anderson announced the Master Plan is getting an award at the upcoming annual convention of the Michigan Association of Planning for Master Plan of the Year. She also shared that the students who did work on the Vine Neighborhood Plan are receiving a student of the year award for their project. Commissioner Milliken also added that Planner Anderson is getting an award and congratulated her.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wissner, supported by Commissioner Greenman Wright, moved to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Anderson" is written over a solid blue horizontal line.

Christina Anderson,
City Planner
Community Planning & Development