

**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING BOARD
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2020**

Held Remotely Via Zoom And Telephone Access

Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Planning Board held on November 11, 2020. Chairman Scott Clein convened the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Present: Chairman Scott Clein; Board Members Robin Boyle, Stuart Jeffares, Bert Koseck, Daniel Share, Janelle Whipple-Boyce, Bryan Williams; Alternate Board Members Jason Emerine, Nasseem Ramin; Student Representative Rachel Hester (all located in Birmingham, MI)

Absent: Student Representative June Lee

Administration: Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Jamil Alawadi, IT Staff
Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist

Master Planning Team: Matt Lambert, DPZ
Sarah Traxler, McKenna

11-134-20

B. Approval Of The Minutes Of The Regular Planning Board Meeting of October 28, 2020

For the motion regarding Jax Car Wash, Mr. Share requested that 'without date' be added to the end of the motion. He explained he had said 'sine die', Latin for 'without date', when making the motion.

Motion by Mr. Share

Seconded by Mr. Williams to approve the minutes of the Regular Planning Board Meeting of October 28, 2020 as amended.

Motion carried, 7-0.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Yeas: Share, Williams, Boyle, Koseck, Clein, Jeffares, Whipple-Boyce

Nays: None

11-135-20

C. Chairperson's Comments

Chairman Clein acknowledged Veteran's Day and thanked all servicemembers for their service. He then welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. He stated the meeting was being held under the auspices of recently enacted state legislation. Chairman Clein reviewed procedures for the meeting.

Chairman Clein took a moment to remind the public that:

- The master plan draft currently being reviewed is a first draft, and none of the recommendations have been endorsed or adopted by the City or any City boards as of yet. The draft is still under review.
- A master plan is a framework for land planning in a City. The adoption of a master plan does not change ordinance on its own. Rather, once a master plan is adopted, it is used as a guide to inform the City administration on how to better align ordinances with the City's goals.
- This draft combines national best practices in master planning and extensive feedback from community stakeholders.
- The intent of the current draft review meetings is to provide the master planning team with even further community and Board feedback. The master planning team will then use that feedback to create a second master plan draft that will even more accurately reflect the community's goals for the City for the next two decades.
- The public will also have ample opportunities to provide feedback on the second master plan draft as well.

11-136-20

D. Review Of The Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

11-137-20

E. Study Session Items

In response to ongoing public feedback, Mr. Lambert recommended that the Planning Board plan to facilitate two study sessions on the upcoming topic of neighborhoods rather than just one study session.

- 1. Review of First Draft of 2040 Birmingham Plan - Mixed Use Districts**
 - o Haynes Square (pages 200 - 207)
 - o S. Woodward Gateway (pages 208 - 223)
 - o Rail District (pages 224 – 232)

Mr. Lambert reviewed the item.

Mr. Williams noted:

- Cars travelling south on big Woodward do not know to go to Old Woodward to make a right turn onto Lincoln. The sign says No Right Turn from big Woodward and people often make an illegal turn there. When drivers do not make that illegal turn they often take

Ruffner and Humphrey, two narrow streets that should not be used as cut-throughs for Woodward traffic.

- There is a new opportunity to consider including the south end of Adams Square Shopping Center in the City's plans for the Triangle area, as there is now new ownership of that part of the shopping center. Planning Director Ecker could reach out to the new ownership to see whether that might be more possible than it was in the past.
- The City must find a way to divest itself of some of its publicly-owned property. The Commission should look into changing the ordinance to allow that.
- Moving commercial closer to big Woodward, improving the intersection of Adams, Lincoln and Woodward, making it easier to cross Woodward via bicycle or walking, and removing the parking in front of businesses on big Woodward are all worthwhile goals to pursue.
- He was unsure about creating more multi-family housing to the east and west of the alleys in the S. Old Woodward gateway area. Evergreens or some other way of buffering the sound and the commercial aspects could be considered.
- He was very much in favor of the proposal to unify the east and west sides of the City across Haynes.

Mr. Koseck, Ms. Whipple-Boyce, and Chairman Clein expressed enthusiasm for the draft's proposals for Haynes Square.

Mr. Koseck said that while he liked the idea, he was not sure how building owners who have frontage on Woodward would react to the land in front of those buildings being sold. He also expressed enthusiasm for the draft's proposals for the S. Old Woodward area. He suggested Mr. Lambert consider recommending a vehicular or pedestrian connection from north of Worth Street up to Bowers.

Mr. Lambert said he liked the idea of such a connection.

Mr. Koseck and Mr. Williams agreed that closing off S. Old Woodward further to the north would be a good idea.

Mr. Jeffares said:

- Multifamily residential along the alleys as proposed would go a long way towards minimizing the sound from Woodward that can be heard by residents in the nearby single family residential areas.
- A significant number of the homes adjacent to alleys currently are already rentals.
- He was supportive of creating more shared streets in the City. Merrill would be one good candidate.
- Considering limiting sidewalks in the Rail District might be somewhat premature, because as it stands no one would currently trust that those streets are adequately shared between pedestrians and vehicles.

Mr. Jeffares and Ms. Whipple-Boyce agreed that the draft's proposal for the train station would be a positive step for the City.

Ms. Whipple-Boyce recommended that the proposed greenspaces in the plan's diagrams, such as the ones on page 218, be colored in green. She said she liked the recommendations for the Rail

District, and said they reminded her of recommendations Mr. Boyle has made for the area in the past.

Mr. Boyle mentioned that he preferred to call it the 'lower Triangle' instead of Haynes Square. While he liked the idea of townhouses along the alleys near Woodward, he was concerned that townhouses in Birmingham tend to be exorbitantly priced instead of attainably priced. He said he would want to avoid that. He recommended controlled vehicle areas over shared areas in Haynes, citing Barcelona's recent expansion of its pedestrian-only areas as a potential source of inspiration. He said the plan should be more clear about the mechanisms and drivers for creating the change the City wants to see in the lower Triangle and the Rail District.

Mr. Boyle, Chairman Clein and Mr. Williams concurred the City's missing middle housing could be created in the Haynes Square area.

Chairman Clein opined that if Haynes Square could be exclusively midrise multi-family with the exclusion of Haynes Street itself that would be a planning success.

Mr. Share said there must be ways of avoiding coming across cross streets to pull into the parking for businesses on ~~Old~~ Woodward **in the South Gateway**. He said he would like to see the amount of asphalt minimized in some places throughout the City, citing the area between Bakers Square and the fire station, and the parking lot behind Walgreens as two examples. He also noted that the City has many areas where residential density could be increased, and said it would be helpful to know 1. how many new residents each area could reasonably absorb and 2. whether the City wants to increase density in all of those areas, or just some. He said the City need not increase density in every location; rather, it just has to increase density enough to accomplish its goals.

Mr. Lambert said the City should consider focusing on creating parking that would allow Haynes Square and the lower Triangle to absorb more residential. He noted those areas would likely provide mostly multifamily residential options and would not likely accommodate the whole range of 'missing middle' of housing.

Mr. Koseck suggested the park in the Triangle District, since it is small, could be turned into a piazza.

Chairman Clein stated:

- There needs to be more shared and consolidated parking in the Rail District.
- The draft needs to clarify what it means by 'low density' vis-a-vis S. Old Woodward.
- The proposal for the 'sleeve' parking is so much better than the 'tray' parking that he would just as soon see the 'tray' parking removed from the draft as a possibility.
- As far as increasing residential density, development of seams should be the lowest priority in his opinion.
- For Haynes Square/'LoTri'/'SoTri' flipping the access to downtown from Bowers to Haynes would be a positive improvement.
- Priorities for increasing residential density should be the downtown and Haynes Square with the Rail District a distant third.

- Increased residential in Haynes Square should be done with an aim towards complementing the downtown, rather than competing with it.
- While he was interested in the draft's proposals for Adams and Haynes, he thought they needed some more thought as far as maintaining access. The City should be careful to avoid recreating the circumstances of Maple and Woodward at Haynes and Adams.

Public Comment

Paul Reagan echoed his comments from previous meetings recommending the City consider a series of bridges over Woodward to connect the east and west sides of the City.

David Bloom said he liked Mr. Reagan's idea. He said he agreed with various Board comments regarding deprioritizing seams, densifying the downtown and south Triangle areas, and choosing which areas of the City to increase residential densification. He asked whether the focus on increasing residential density served to support the current residents of Birmingham or the hypothetical future residents.

Chairman Clein asked Mr. Lambert to explain at a future meeting where the impetus for increasing residential density comes from. He said it would help to clarify whether the City's goal in doing so is growth or planning that will help avoid the potential adverse effects of unmanaged residential increases.

Mr. Boyle explained to Mr. Bloom that increasing the 'missing middle' in residential will sustain the City's school system. He noted that when housing is very expensive the families that move into those homes can afford to send their children to private schools, which leads to a lack of support for the school system. He stated the school system is integral to the City's success, per page 15 of the draft. He recommended that all conversations regarding residential densification and making some housing more attainable be thought of through that lens.

Mr. Jeffares noted that increasing residential density will help sustain brick-and-mortar businesses in the City. Having more people living in the City will mean there are more people looking to **conveniently** get their needs met locally instead of online.

Mr. Lambert confirmed that businesses catering to local residential needs would be a draw for residents.

Mr. Williams said the City needs to shift much of its downtown building space from office, and somewhat less from commercial, to residential. He agreed with Mr. Jeffares that having very little reasonably priced residential downtown will be a disaster for retail.

11-138-20

F. Miscellaneous Business and Communications:

a. Communications

b. Administrative Approval Correspondence

c. Draft Agenda for the next Regular Planning Board Meeting (December 9, 2020)

- **Fruition SLUP - 856 N. Old Woodward**
 - **Tapper's SLUP - Merrillwood Bldg**
 - **All Seasons Final Site Plan**
- d. Other Business**

11-139-20

G. Planning Division Action Items

- a. Staff Report on Previous Requests**
- b. Additional Items from tonight's meeting**

11-140-20

H. Adjournment

No further business being evident, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Jana L. Ecker

Planning Director

APPROVED