STUDY SESSION

The study session commenced at 6 p.m.

1. Sam’s Club land use and development study

Laura Chamberlain, consulting planner with HKGi, presented on the background research, site and environmental analysis, land use and development scenarios that were explored, criteria for evaluating the scenarios, the city council’s policy direction, and the ultimate study recommendations. The mixed-use redevelopment scenario was most favored by the majority of the city councilmembers because the potential jobs and housing mix best supported and took full advantage of the future LRT station. The councilmembers still wanted future development to focus on affordable housing on the site.

Ms. Chamberlain explained that the planning commission will be holding the public hearing and make recommendations on three proposed action items at their August 21, 2019 meeting. The study recommended amending the comprehensive plan future land use designation from commercial to transit-oriented development.

The study recommended changing the zoning from General Commercial (C-2) to Business Park (BP) on the north side of the site and High Density Residential (RC) on the south side of the site. Additionally, the study recommended creating a definition for self-storage facility that distinguishes it from warehouse/storage uses and restricting self-storage facilities to industrial properties.

Ms. Chamberlain also shared the input received at a recent neighborhood meeting held on the subject of the land use and zoning amendments.
Chair Eckholm stated that he favored the multi-family residential redevelopment scenario.

Commissioner Erwin concurred with the Chair. She asked about the potential environmental justice consideration of having housing and especially affordable housing located on a site where there is contamination.

Mr. Walther noted that similar concerns were raised by councilmembers Harris and Mavity. Public health and safety would absolutely need to be protected both during construction activities and long-term for any employees, residents or visitors to the site. There are effective ways to do this and other similarly contaminated sites have successfully redeveloped in the city.

Chair Eckholm stated he wanted an emphasis on pedestrian oriented design throughout the site and connections to pedestrian networks around the site. He hopes to make sure that conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians on the site were minimized, with pedestrians getting the priority in design.

Chair Eckholm was concerned about splitting the zoning of the site. It might mean the reuse of the building could leave the remainder of the site unused for a while, or could mean that any residential buildings put in there would have to look down on an old, unused building.

Commissioner Erwin stated mini-storage on the site would not be appropriate.

2. Planning Commissioner training with City Attorney

Commissioners received a presentation from City Attorney Soren Mattick. The training and resource materials covered several topics as an introduction for new commissioners and a refresher for seasoned commissioners. Topics included role of the planning commission, open meeting law, conflicts of interest, developing defensible findings of fact, and conduct of public hearings.

3. Ground Floor Window Transparency

Mr. Walther introduced the topic. He noted the commission discussed this topic previously in 2018 and at a joint meeting with the city council in 2019. The commission had not yet come to any agreement on a few points in the proposed ordinance. Also, he noted three new members joined the commission this year.
He said the city council wants to require window transparency for ground floor commercial uses; particularly for high pedestrian areas and ground floor retail. He asked for the commission’s guidance on how staff could edit the ordinance satisfy the commissioners’ remaining concerns.

The discussion included the importance and challenges of providing flexibility in the code in order to allow developers, property owners or businesses to both meet the intent and still meet their business needs. Balancing the desire for transparency and the business need for privacy in some situations.

The discussion also focused on when property owners would be required to comply with the new rules.

Commissioners also discussed the scope of the requirements, including the districts and types of buildings and uses.

Mr. Walther shared an email that was received by Commissioner Robertson who suggested edits to reduce the minimum transparency requirements. He stated that while the city’s desired percentages may be higher, the city regulations should not set too high of a minimum requirement.

Commissioners also asked staff to review the amount of window area that could be covered by signs. There were concerns the maximum amount may be too low.

4. Inclusionary housing zoning code amendment

Mr. Walther provided an update to Commissioners regarding recent changes to the Inclusionary Housing policy. Staff intend to add some of the new policy requirements to the zoning code to bolster the new policy.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Walther
Planning and Zoning Supervisor