OFFICIAL MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
ST. LOUIS PARK, MINNESOTA
October 16, 2019 – 6:00 p.m.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynette Dumalag, Matt Eckholm, Courtney Erwin, Claudia Johnston-Madison, Jessica Kraft, Carl Robertson.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Beneke

STAFF PRESENT: Jennifer Monson, Gary Morrison, Sean Walther

1. Call to Order – Roll Call

2. Approval of Minutes of July 17, August 7 and October 2, 2019

    Commissioner Robertson made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Johnston-Madison seconded the motion, and the motion passed on a vote of 6-0.

3. Public Hearings

    A. Zoning ordinance regarding ground floor, street facing, commercial window transparency requirements

       Applicant: City of St. Louis Park

       Case Nos: 18-70-ZA

    Jennifer Monson, Planner, presented the staff report.

    Ms. Monson noted the commission has voiced support for the ordinance but wanted to ensure the ordinance applied to all commercial areas, was flexible especially for existing uses and small businesses, creates few non-conforming buildings and did not unduly reduce usable space within the buildings.

    She added the proposed ordinance would be applicable to all ground floor street-facing facades in the C-1 and C-2 districts, and retail, service and restaurant uses in O and BP districts as well. Additional requirements are noted in the staff report.

    Chair Eckholm opened the public hearing.

    The Chair closed the public hearing.
Chair Eckholm thanked city staff for their work on this ordinance, adding this meets the spirit of what the city is trying to accomplish, but is also not onerous.

Commissioner Johnston-Madison stated this is the result of the hard work done by staff and she supports this.

Commissioner Robertson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dumalag, recommending approval of the ordinance. The motion passed on a vote of 6-0.

5. Communications

Mr. Walther noted the topics of the study session that followed the regular meeting stated the commission’s next regular meeting will be November 5.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

**STUDY SESSION**

The study session commenced at 6:15 p.m.

1. Rezoning C-2 General Commercial properties to C-1 Neighborhood Commercial.

Gary Morrison, Assistant Zoning Administrator, provided background.

He pointed out Cedar Lake Road and Louisiana Avenue to be rezoned to C-1 neighborhood commercial. The commissioners had no concerns or questions about the rezoning.

Additionally, Mr. Morrison noted the Texa-Tonka and Knollwood areas to also be rezoned to C-1 neighborhood commercial.

Chair Eckholm stated the area around Chick-Fil-A and the liquor store is very congested and not safe.

Mr. Morrison pointed out Highway 100 and Excelsior Boulevard and rezoning this to C-1 neighborhood commercial also.
Commissioner Kraft asked what districts or properties are zoned for auto repair uses. Mr. Morrison stated they are allowed in industrial and C-2 district. He noted there are districts for them but not always properties available.

Commissioner Robertson asked about having a discussion at a later date on allowing small auto repair shops in C-1 districts, as it seems they might be acceptable with certain conditions.

Commissioner Johnston-Madison stated there are already auto repair shops along Excelsior Boulevard including Bosch, Youngsteds and the BP.

Mr. Morrison stated gas stations are allowed in C-1, but auto repair shops are not.

Commissioner Johnston-Madison stated the existing buildings would be allowed to continue as legal nonconforming uses. She added they all back up into single family homes, and noted the pedestrian experience there is difficult.

Mr. Morrison also pointed out additional areas on Excelsior Boulevard to be rezoned, farther to the east.

Mr. Morrison noted the area at Minnetonka Boulevard and Highway 25 and also at Highway 100.

The commissioners supported proceeding with the process to consider rezoning all areas that were discussed to be rezoned C-1 Neighborhood Commercial.

2. Parkway Residences development and environmental assessment worksheet.

Ms. Monson noted the application location is immediately west of Parkway 25, west of 31st Street between Glenhurst Avenue and Inglewood Avenue. She stated currently there are 24 affordable units located here, and whatever development is proposed here will need to replace all naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) properties at a one to one rate.

Ms. Monson noted the proposal is to redevelop the north side of 31st Street, and shared access with Parkway 25. All the parking is located within the buildings underground within the buildings, except for 3 spaces.

Commissioner Johnston-Madison asked if tax increment financing will be requested.

Ms. Monson stated yes.
Commissioner Robertson asked if all the residents of the existing buildings would be displaced.

Ms. Monson stated that preliminary indications are that the developer would be attempting to relocate all the residents to comparable units in St. Louis Park and the residents that qualify would be given the opportunity to occupy available units in the new or remodeled buildings. They may even be offered relocation assistance by the developer. These steps go above and beyond the city’s policies and ordinances.

Commissioner Erwin asked if there are stipulations to meeting the affordable housing requirements in all three phases.

Mr. Walther stated the replacements will need to occur during phase one.

Commissioner Erwin asked why the application was incomplete.

Ms. Monson stated the issues were primarily related to the civil engineering stormwater management plan at the site, and more details were also needed regarding the inclusionary housing.

Commissioner Robertson stated this is quite an aggressive and ambitious plan.

3. Other updates.

Ms. Monson noted PLACE submitted an application to amend plans for the south side of the development, called Via Luna. She described the changes to the building plans, which included a reduced number of residential units, a change to underground parking rather than an above ground structure, and uses of the buildings were moved around within the proposed buildings. The parking counts and number of car free units will be a consideration and the proposed reductions may be justified given its proximity to the Wooddale Avenue light rail station.

Commissioner Johnston-Madison asked if the financing is now available for this developer.

Mr. Walther stated the developer has the financing for the north site, and they will be requesting development agreement extensions for both sites in mid-November from the council. They also have funding for the residential units on the south site, and they are still working on financing for the hotel component.

Commissioner Johnston-Madison expressed general concerns about the ability of PLACE to deliver the project and the extensions that have been needed.
Chair Eckholm stated that he appreciated the many elements and lofty goals of the development. Even if this project does not come to fruition, another project will come along, so there is no concern, as ultimately there will be an affordable housing development in this location.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.