The study session commenced at 6:00 p.m.

1. 2020 Work Plan revisited (priorities, revised timelines, COVID, Racial Equity)

Mr. Walther presented background and the staff report to the commission. He stated the report gives context to the discussion regarding city council and comp plan strategic direction, adding that these items will be tied back to the strategic priorities.

Mr. Walther stated the discussion will focus on council's priorities, including accessory dwelling units, home occupation rules, approaches and general direction.

Commissioner Eckholm stated home occupation is a good item to focus on, as well as single-family building scale limits. Mr. Walther agreed adding the council is set to discuss this as well and give direction.

Commissioner Beneke stated he is interested in owner occupancy as well, and more affordable housing ideas. He added reviewing the ADU concept every few months might be worthwhile as well.

Commissioner Erwin stated she is interested in housing initiative and affordable housing discussions as well. She said she is interested in discussion the percentages of allowable units in family-housing development.

Commissioner Dumalag agreed adding she would like to also discuss housing analysis and the direction of affordable housing in the community as well.

Mr. Walther stated housing staff can be brought in to assist with housing discussions.

Commissioner Eckholm added he would like to discuss housing analysis and affordable housing and looking at this without ratio of ownership vs. rental threshold, stating he could see public support issues unfolding if a ratio is mandated in the city.
Commissioner Erwin agreed with this adding it’s difficult to create policy that can be so fluid and abstract, if rental thresholds are enforced.

Chair Kraft stated in light of Covid with home occupation issues, transit-oriented development and other topics like industrial zoning topics might be best to shift to early next year for discussion.

Commissioner Beneke added he hears comments from folks about there not being enough single-family housing in St. Louis Park adding he would be interested still in discussing the owner vs. rental ratio.

Commissioner Weber asked if the council is interested in looking at codes as they relate to Covid moving forward. He asked about more forced social distancing in interiors of public places, for example.

Mr. Walther stated he is not aware of any conversations with council on this. Typically, code discussions relate to the exterior of buildings vs. the interiors.

Chair Kraft stated it is not the role of the planning commission to discuss this level of detail in development.

Commissioner Eckholm asked about strongly suggesting to architects about interior design as it relates to Covid.

Commissioner Dumalag asked about COVID and the interior of buildings.

Chair Kraft stated the planning commission should not be dictating this type of detail into the code.

Mr. Walther the transit-oriented development and industrial topics could be moved from the priorities list and discussed in the future.

Commissioner Eckholm agreed TOD can be held off to the end of the year or next year for discussion, and a focus on home occupation and neighborhood items would be more appropriate discussion items now, in light of folks working from home.

2. Architectural design zoning code text amendment

Mr. Morrison presented the zoning amendment information. He reviewed the staff report and stated this involves restructuring building materials in class 1.

Commissioner Eckholm asked about costs of class 1 materials as it relates to affordable housing. He asked if there are specific materials that are more suitable for affordable housing.

Mr. Morrison stated he has not seen materials being a hurdle in the past.

Mr. Walther stated he has heard that some materials can contribute to higher cost in class 1. He pointed out as buildings get taller, materials can become a weight issue as well. Also,
questions about glazing and transparency at ground level have become environmental issues as well. However, he did state materials only do not contribute totally to affordability issues.

Commissioner Erwin asked for clarification about fiber reinforcement siding vs. board as class 1 vs. 2 building materials.

Mr. Walther stated this was an addition to the code based on approvals for PUD in the city. He stated this was related to approvals from the city council on projects, and then was added to the code.

Commissioner Erwin stated there should be some clarification here for siding. She noted the siding styles are confusing within the class 1 and 2.

Mr. Walther stated staff can work on this clarification.

Mr. Walther noted colors used on buildings and a variance that was requested. He asked if the commission wanted to consider exceptions to architectural standards on colors going forward, or just deal with them on a one by one basis.

Chair Kraft stated it is difficult to change this, and how it would be based, and noted that murals also present accent colors and asked if variances are allowed under the code.

Commissioner Eckholm added he understands this regulation within the ordinance but wondered if the variance is the best way to handle exceptions.

Commissioner Eckholm asked the commissioners thoughts on the articles and the parking garages.

Commissioner Erwin stated she is supportive of adaptability with parking garages.

Mr. Walther stated two articles were provided to commissioners on adaptable parking garages, adding staff agrees with more adaptability and resilience in these structures.

Commissioner Weber asked if parking garages are owned by the city or are private.

Mr. Walther stated the city does not own any parking garages within the city, however there are several exceptions within the city.

Commissioner Eckholm stated the least appropriate place for a giant new parking structure is next to a light rail transit station, but added if it has to be there, it should be able to be turned into something more useful in the future.

Commissioner Dumalag asked if there will need to be requirements for adaptable parking structures, especially when thinking long-term.

3. Painted sign zoning code text amendment

Mr. Morrison stated this item came out of a complaint, when a sign was painted on the side of a building without permission. He stated this was being reviewed and considering striking this from the ordinance. He stated also if the business is sold, or moves, the owner is then responsible for covering up or removing the sign on the building when leaving.
Mr. Morrison asked the commissioners for feedback before this moves forward.

Commissioner Weber supported the proposed change and asked if there is any difference between a sign and a mural, and if a mural would be allowed as well as a sign in the code.

Mr. Morrison stated the mural would be a super-graphic and has a separate definition from the painted sign. He added it could not include a logo or brand name within it if it’s a mural or a super-graphic. He noted if a sign was incorporated into the mural, it would be allowed. Mr. Walther stated an imaginary box would be drawn around the logo portion and then be allowed.

Commissioner Weber stated he appreciates the willingness to be as open as possible to the approval of both sign and murals as one, so the creative side can be exhibited.

Chair Kraft asked about if the business left and returning the sign to the original state, and what would be expected here.

Mr. Morrison stated it could be sand blasted or the new tenant could paint over it.

Commissioner Eckholm asked if a new tenant moved in, how long the city would allow before the sign is painted over or removed.

Mr. Morrison stated the city could work with the owner on this, but the sign would need to be removed promptly and should be addressed in the code related to timeframe.

Mr. Walther added if it becomes a maintenance issue, then the city would step in.

Commissioner Dumalag stated it will be important to include a timeframe.

Mr. Morrison stated the property owner would be responsible ultimately.

Commissioner Eckholm added he would hate to see it be too stringent, adding it should be a nice balance, as these signs do add character to neighborhoods and they should be encouraged.

Commissioner Weber added he is happy about this and it addresses equity issues for future business owners as well.

**Additional topics**

Mr. Walther noted Councilmember Mavity will be leaving the City of St. Louis Park and therefore will be resigning from the city council effective October 31, 2020. A new councilmember will be appointed by the city council.

Mr. Walther also noted SWLRT will have some road closures over Labor Day weekend to relocate a bridge into the rail corridor and provide a trail bridge as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.