



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF
THE EDINA PLANNING COMMISSION**
Wednesday, July 27, 2005, 7:00 PM
Edina City Hall Council Chambers
4801 West 50th Street

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Schroeder, Fischer, Lonsbury, McClelland, Runyan, Workinger and Chair
Byron

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Brown and Grabiell

STAFF PRESENT:

Craig Larsen and Jackie Hoogenakker

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting were filed as submitted

II. NEW BUSINESS:

S-05-3 Z-05-1& Amendment to Comp Plan	Preliminary Rezoning and Preliminary Plat Riverview Commercial Properties, LLC 4121 50th St West and 5017 Indianola Avenue
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Mr. Larsen informed the Commission the subject properties are located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Indianola Avenue and West 50th Street. The property owner proposes to remove the existing 9-unit apartment building and 9-stall parking garage located at 4121 West 50th Street, realign property lines (4121 W 50th St & 5017 Indianola) between the parcels and construct a new 6-unit condominium building.

Mr. Larsen concluded staff believes this proposal has merits. The plan needs several variances; it replaces a building that is also non-conforming in regard to density, building setback, parking and lot coverage. Maintaining the single dwelling lot to the south of the new building preserves the relationship between multi-family and single family land uses. Mr. Larsen stated Staff assumes that the new home built on the balance of the existing lot will be

constructed without variances. Staff recommends the following actions: change the land use designation of the northerly 28 feet of 5021 Indianola Avenue from Single Dwelling to High Density Residential, Rezone the same parcel from R-1 to PRD-4, Preliminary Plat, Lot width and lot area variance for the single dwelling lot and vacation of alley right of way.

The proponents, Mr. Chris Cowen, Mr. Dean DoVolis and Mr. John Wanninger were present to respond to questions.

Mr. Cowen told the Commission it is the goal of the development team to create a high quality, one level living experience close to retail facilities and other amenities. Mr. Cowen explained the six proposed units will range in size from 2,700 to 3,500 square feet. Mr. Cowen said in his opinion the proposed building will enhance the streetscape and will possess a more residential feel than the existing apartment building. Mr. Cowen introduced Mr. Dean DoVolis, architect for the project.

Mr. DoVolis, 5009 Ridge Road, Edina, MN addressed the Commission and with photos pointed out the existing conditions of the site. Mr. DoVolis explained one of the goals for this project is to retain as many trees as possible, and it is believed only two significant trees will be lost as a result of razing the present building and constructing a new building. Mr. DoVolis reviewed the floor plans of the proposed units and informed the Commission the building will provide 2.16 enclosed parking stalls per unit (above code requirements) which is one reason the building encroaches father south. Continuing, Mr. DoVolis said the site will also contain 4 surface guest parking spaces. Mr. DoVolis explained as mentioned previously by Mr. Cowen the building will have a residential feel with exterior materials including stone, wood shakes, copper, dormers, bays, gables and fireplaces. All landscaping will meet or exceed code standards, adding the development team is working with residents of the Henley (directly east) to formulate a landscaping plan between structures.

Commissioner Runyan asked Mr. DoVolis if he knows the distance between the Henley and the proposed new building. Mr. DoVolis said between structures there is roughly 30+ feet.

Commissiner Schroeder asked Mr. DoVolis to again explain how many substantial trees will be lost as a result of this project. Mr. DoVolis responded he believes three large trees will be lost two directly due to redevelopment and one tree to Dutch elm disease. Mr. DeVoilis reiterated it is important to the development team to retain as many mature trees as possible, and to the best of his knowledge two trees would be lost including the diseased tree.

Commissioner Workinger asked Mr. DoVolis to point out the guest parking area. Mr. DoVolis indicated to the Commission guests will park at the same elevation of the garage along the driveway entrance/exit (off Indianola).

Commissioner Workinger asked Mr. DoVolis if he believes snow storage will be adequate in this area. Mr. DeVoils said he believes snow storage would not be an issue.

Chairman Byron questioned if a side walk is proposed along the west boundary line. Mr. DoVolis said that option is being left open. He stated if it is the wish of the Commission to install a sidewalk in this location that could be accomplished. Chairman Byron acknowledged he is not certain if there is a sidewalk along that side of Indianola, adding if there is, it may be a good idea to continue the sidewalk to 50th Street.

Ms. Mimi Rohlfson, 5025 Indianola Avenue asked Mr. DoVolis if a new house is constructed at 5017 Indianola Avenue would the new house be “overly large.” Mr. DeVoils said a new house would be designed to blend in with the existing homes along Indianola and not be overly large. Continuing, Mr. DoVolis explained he is an urban architect and has designed homes for lots under 50 feet in width. Ms. Rohlfson thanked Mr. DeVoils and questioned if a builder has been retained. Mr. DeVoils responded at this time a builder hasn’t been chosen.

Commissioner McClelland questioned Mr. Larsen on the reason for the rezoning if the use remains the same. Mr. Larsen explained a strip of land behind the existing apartment building (and between the house to the south) needs to be vacated and replatted with the apartment site. This strip of land is zoned R-1, Single Dwelling Unit District and contains a vacated alley way and a portion of 5017 Indianola Avenue triggering the reason for the rezoning from R-1 to PRD, Planned Residence District. Commissioner McClelland asked Mr. Larsen if he knows the width of the other lots along Indianola. Mr. Larsen said he believes lot widths range in size from 50 to 75 feet. Commissioner McClelland said she was pleased to see fewer condo units, adding she worries about over building and massing.

Commissioner Workinger asked Mr. Larsen how evident the PRD-4 district is in this area. Mr. Larsen responded the PRD-4 district continues to the Henley (directly east), around the corner to The Lanterns, Regency and the newer 8-unit building on France Avenue.

Commissioner Fischer told the Commission he has no issues with the design of the proposed building, adding it appears to be tastefully done. Commissioner Fischer informed the Commission he sits on the Affordable Housing Task Force commenting that while he understands this project, he wants the Commission to note the City is losing an affordable housing element with the razing of the existing building. Continuing, Commissioner Fischer noted this project requires variances to achieve less housing. Commissioner Fischer wondered if some type of fee could be added to an application (such as this) with the fee earmarked for affordable housing when affordable housing is lost. Concluding, Commissioner Fischer said in his opinion the City should develop an

affordable housing policy to facilitate development of new and redevelopment of existing multi-residential buildings. Commissioner Fischer acknowledged due to the constraints of the site and low unit number (six) it would be unrealistic to require affordable housing for this project.

Commissioner Schroeder stated he agrees with the comments from Commissioner Fischer with regard to affordable housing. Commissioner Schroeder asked Mr. Larsen if he believes the building could be redesigned to more comply with ordinance requirements. He pointed out multiple variances are requested. Mr. Larsen responded that in his opinion it would be difficult to redevelop this site without variances. He pointed out the subject site and building is already non-conforming.

Chair Byron asked Mr. Cowen if he believes the house planned for the adjacent lot can be constructed without variances. Mr. Cowen responded it is the desire of the development team to construct the new home without variances. Mr. Cowen deferred to Mr. DoVolis. Mr. DoVolis told the Commission he designs homes for lots much smaller than the subject site. He pointed out in Minneapolis a majority of the lots are 40 feet in width, sometimes less. Chair Byron stated he is confident a home could be designed for this lot without the need of variances. Mr. DoVolis added at final approval firm house plans will be submitted.

Commissioner Schroeder asked if a comfort level is achieved with regard to the multitude of variances needed to redevelop this site. Mr. Larsen explained when staff was approached for redevelopment of this site it was felt that it was very important to ensure that enclosed parking demands were met. Mr. Larsen added this “demand” forced a larger footprint toward the south. Mr. Larsen said it is not unrealistic to ask if six units are too many, however, when one looks at our ordinance it relates better to a suburban environment not an urban environment such as this. Mr. Larsen said it is possible the code hasn’t acknowledged Edina’s urban element. In conclusion, Mr. Larsen said he is comfortable with the proposal, reiterating the existing building is non-conforming, and anything constructed on this site would probably require variances.

Commissioner Fischer asked if the City has an appropriate zoning plan for urban redevelopment. Mr. Larsen responded Edina’s ordinances apply to all districts, regardless of their location. Mr. Larsen acknowledged there are some unique areas in the City that presently would be considered non-conforming by our current code and if re-built would require multiple variances. These more “urban” areas usually are located east of Highway 100.

Commissioner Lonsbury commented that the proposed new building will be taller than the existing building and asked if the developer considered going farther south with the building and not retaining the single family home. Mr. DoVolis said it was important to retain a single family home on this lot to ensure the transition from multi-family residential to single family residential remains the

same. Mr. DoVolis said retaining the single family home status makes sense and creates a nice rhythm to the block. Chair Byron said in his opinion that speaks to a commitment to the single family neighborhood.

Mr. Steve Farsht, 5021 Indianola Avenue told the Commission he had some concerns with regard to this proposal but was surprised and impressed the proponents listened to how important it was to him to retain the single family home to his north; continuing, Mr. Farsht added he believes when the existing home is razed the newly constructed home will meet ordinance standards and be a benefit to the block.

Commissioner McClelland states she sympathizes with statements from the newer members to the Commission regarding this rezoning, adding it is possible that in the past the Commission and Council should have considered altering the zoning requirements (including density, setbacks, etc) for our more urban areas. Commissioner McClelland acknowledged they were slow to recognize the redevelopment restraints that exist in these areas. Commissioner McClelland said on her part she tends to (and still does) view these areas as “redevelopment zones”. Continuing, Commissioner McClelland said she also agrees with comments from other Commissioners that something needs to be done to incorporate an affordable housing policy as we view development and redevelopment proposals. Commissioner McClelland stated in this instance she believes that affordable housing is not an option, but feels there are other areas in the City where some type of framework could guide the Commission when reviewing new proposals. Concluding, Commissioner McClelland stated she can support this proposal under the terms of redevelopment.

Commissioner Workinger commented that at first he felt the height of the proposed building was a bit awkward, but the introductions of differing architectural elements appear to support the additional height. He pointed out the mass of the structure will be “broken up” by these different elements and will provide a more residential flavor to the building and site.

Commissioner Lonsbury acknowledged this area in our City is completely unique, adding he has less trouble considering this proposal favorably than he would if a project requiring as many variances were proposed in our more “suburban” areas of the City. Commissioner Lonsbury commented, in his opinion, the proposed building seems to fit and isn’t inappropriate.

Commissioner Runyan stated he can support the proposal as submitted and moved to recommend Preliminary Rezoning, Preliminary Plat, Final Development Plan and Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan subject to: change in land use designation of the northerly 28 feet of 5017 Indianola Avenue from Single Dwelling to High Density Residential, Rezone the same parcel from R-1, Single Dwelling Unit District to PRD-4, Planned Residence District-4, Preliminary Plat, and lot width and lot area variance for the single dwelling lot and

vacation of alley right-of-way. Commissioner McClelland seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

Chair Byron said at this time the Commission should take the opportunity to recommend to Council that a plan be developed to guide future development and redevelopment in Edina with regard to affordable housing.

Commissioner Fischer thanked Chair Byron for that comment and said it appears to him that the Commission is very much in agreement in creating a development tool to address affordable housing.

Commissioner Workinger asked Mr. Larsen if the Comprehensive Plan contains an affordable housing element. Mr. Larsen responded it does, adding 25 years ago the City studied affordable housing and designated certain vacant sites for development of affordable housing. Those sites are now developed; adding 25 years later vacant land in Edina is very difficult to come by. Mr. Larsen said it is not unrealistic to suggest that a “redevelopment framework” is needed to address affordable housing. Commissioner Workinger questioned if the Council could consider “affordable overlay districts” and designate certain areas as suitable locations for “affordable housing” if redeveloped. Commissioner Workinger added he understands there will be development limitations and pointed out when the City rezoned the Wallingford site (70th & Metro) it was able to secure some affordable housing units on that site. Mr. Larsen agreed, adding that approach would be an option. Commissioner Fischer told the Commission the Affordable Housing Task Force is trying to formulate guidelines, adding it is a start and he believes the Task Force is heading in the right direction. Commissioner Workinger commented if certain areas had an “affordable” overlay designation the “affordable” issue could at least be addressed up front if redevelopment in those areas were to occur.

Commissioner Lonsbury suggested the possibility of a monetary fee (as previously mentioned by Commissioner Fischer) similar to the Parkland Dedication fee the City requires from developers/property owners for residential subdivisions. This fee could be placed in a fund to facilitate affordable housing.

Chair Byron stated this is a good start, adding the Council will read our comments.

III. OTHER BUSINESS:

Planning Commission Meetings Televised – Comments

Mr. Larsen informed the Commission the Council has indicated they are considering televising the meetings of the Planning Commission. The Council would like Commission input on this issue.

Commissioner Runyan stated he has mixed feelings with regard to this request. Commissioner Runyan pointed out in Edina the Council is the decision making body, not the Commission. The function of the Commission is to recommend to the Council. Concluding, Commissioner Runyan said he really doesn't know if this is needed.

Chairman Byron commented that maybe it would be a good idea to have the meetings televised. Residents would realize the City's Boards and Commissions don't operate "like a secret club".

Commissioner Workinger said the Commission is doing the public's work and he thinks it would be a good idea to have Commission meetings televised. Commissioner McClelland said she agrees especially in light of Edina being one of the few cities that do not televise Commission meetings.

Commissioner Lonsbury told the Commission he has no opinion on this. He added the Commission serves at the pleasure of the Council and if the Council wants Commission meetings televised "so be it". Commissioner Lonsbury pointed out the Commission has always operated very openly with all meetings open to the public, reiterating televising Commission meetings is up to the Council. Commissioner Fischer stated he agrees with Commissioner Lonsbury.

A discussion ensued with Commissioners reiterating the point that the Commission is advisory to the Council and the City Council is the governing body that makes all decisions. Commission Members indicated they felt from the standpoint of the public that issues may appear redundant if residents follow both the Commission and Council. The cost to the City of televising Planning Commission meetings was also mentioned with the Commission again pointing out the duplication of process that may be viewed by the public.

In conclusion the Commission felt televising Planning Commission meetings was not necessary; however the Commission has no problem if they are televised.

Commissioner Lonsbury moved to recommend televising Planning Commission meetings noting the Commission does not feel it is necessary; however, the Commission serves at the pleasure of the Council. Commissioner Fischer seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM

Jackie Hoogenakker