



MINUTES
Regular Meeting of the Edina Planning Commission
Wednesday, November 1, 2006, 7:00 PM
Edina City Hall Council Chambers
4801 West 50th Street
Edina, MN

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Lonsbury, Nancy Scherer, Kevin Staunton, Michael Schroeder, Mike Fischer, Stephen Brown, Floyd Grabel, Scott Thiss and Basima Tewfik

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Geof Workinger

STAFF PRESENT:

Cary Teague and Jackie Hoogenakker

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes from the August 30, 2006, meeting were filed as submitted.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

LD-06-4

Christopher and Gina Drazan
4612 and 4608 Oak Drive

Planner Teague addressed the Commission and explained the applicant is proposing to shift their shared lot line two feet to the east for the purpose of adding buildable area to their lot. Additional lot area is needed to facilitate additions to the home located at 4612 Oak Drive. Both lots would continue to meet all minimum lot sizes requirements in the R-1 district.

Planner Teague concluded staff recommends approval of the lot division as proposed.

The proponent, Ms. Drazan was present.

Commissioner Staunton moved to recommend lot division approval subject to the plan presented. Commissioner Fischer seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

III. OTHER BUSINESS:

Presentation of the Housing Succession Plan for Edina's Future – Edina Housing Task Force – Sharon Ming and Scott Massie

Ms. Sharon Ming and Mr. Scott Massie introduced themselves as members of the Edina Housing Task Force, adding they are present to address the Housing Succession Plan.

Ms. Ming told the Commission she has lived in Edina for many years and believes Edina is a great place to live and raise a family. Ms. Ming explained she will be presenting a power point overview highlighting the results of the Housing Task Force two year study to help create a plan of how to maintain and attain affordable housing opportunities in Edina. Ms. Ming said Edina needs a long range plan that encourages affordable housing.

Ms. Ming stated the Task Force acknowledges this issue is very broad and complicated; however a plan is needed. Ms. Ming said at this time the Task Force is recommending that Edina implement a Housing Succession Plan. Continuing, Ms. Ming said this plan proposes a goal of making 500 units of housing available to households of lower and moderate income by the year 2020.

Ms. Ming presented a power point overview of the plan pointing out five strategies to accomplish this plan:

1. Adopt an inclusionary zoning policy;
2. Update Comprehensive Plan to include elements of the Housing Succession Plan;
3. Use the greater Southdale area as a demonstration of a livable, pedestrian friendly urban redevelopment area;
4. Create opportunities to make a portion of Edina's existing housing stock affordable to more people and families; and
5. Leverage existing housing programs to create more opportunities for moderate and lower income families.

Ms. Ming said it is believed that by implementing these strategies over the next 15 years the cost would roughly be around 15 million dollars. With the overall plan requesting that the Edina City Council adopt an additional objective for Edina's Vision 20/20 plan to maintain a full mix of housing options in Edina to

provide opportunities for people to live here throughout their lives, to assign responsibility for implementation of the plan, and to create a financing plan for the Housing Succession Plan. Ms. Ming thanked Commissioners for their support.

Chair Lonsbury thanked the members of the Housing Task Force for their work on this plan and asked Commissioners for their comments.

Commissioners raised the following issues:

- Commissioner Grabiell pointed out to the best of his knowledge Edina already participates (through different means) in helping people achieve affordable housing. Commissioner Grabiell asked how these initiatives are doing, and what more could be done to increase awareness of these programs. Commissioner Grabiell also noted some attention needs to be given to “subsidized” mortgage programs and if a person receives a subsidized mortgage, sells the property for a substantial gain what is given back to the program. Ms. Ming acknowledged that Edina is currently involved with affordable housing through different programs. The East Edina Housing Foundation continues to provide second mortgages. Ms. Ming said second mortgages were offered when Edinborough and Centennial Lakes were developed and with great success; however, it is her understanding that many of these second mortgages have been paid back. Ms. Ming agreed more could be done to educate the public on what Edina presently provides in the way of affordable housing opportunities.
- Commissioner Thiss questioned where the proposed 15 million dollars would come from needed to implement the plan. Would it come from property taxes or from other means. Ms. Ming responded it could come from the general fund, adding there are also other means that could be pursued.
- Commissioner Brown noted the term “affordable housing” can cause concern. What is the definition of “affordable housing” (is it an income percentage). Ms. Ming responded usually the percentage formula is used when calculating affordability.
- Chair Lonsbury pointed out that the City may have difficulty in encouraging development/redevelopment of affordable housing on private property. Creating incentives for property owners and developers to participate in the program through density bonuses and other means need further study to achieve participation. “Land Trust” and “Inclusionary Zoning”, also need further study and clarification. Ms. Ming agreed, however, as noted in the plan there are a number of approaches the City could take. Mr. Massie said one approach is if a developer comes before the City and wants increased density (or needs variances) that request could be used to introduce the concept of affordable housing.

- Chair Lonsbury asked if anyone knows the percentage of affordable housing units within a 5 mile radius of Edina city limits. Ms. Ming said at this time she doesn't have that answer.
- Chair Lonsbury questioned where Edina Schools fit in the affordable housing equation. It is a well know fact that Edina has an excellent school system with Edina students continually achieving some of the highest test scores in the State. and,
- Chair Lonsbury noted there is a documented relationship between student test scores and household income. Would lower income students change the GPA in Edina's schools? Ms. Ming responded that while that statement may have some merit there is also a correlation between parental involvement and student scores. Ms. Ming added she along with many other Edina residents come from middle class backgrounds and are doing just fine. Mr. Massie acknowledged the Task Force never looked at that approach. The Task Force advocates creating housing opportunities in the community for hard working people.

Commissioner Fischer addressed the Commission and informed them he is the Commission liaison to the Housing Task Force and it is his hope that this plan is implemented into the Comprehensive Plan, adding he believes it is a good document that should move forward. Commissioner Fischer said he found the caliber of the volunteers along with the consultants who helped put together this plan as excellent. Commissioner Fischer added the volunteers who worked hard on this report are not only leaders in this community but leaders in their fields of expertise. Commissioner Fischer stressed how difficult this issue is to address; however, he believes there are ways to implement this plan (inclusionary zoning, mixed use, land trust, etc) as suggested in the plan. Continuing, Commissioner Fischer pointed out Edina has always taken a leadership position in the metro area and Edina can continue to take a leadership role in the area of affordable housing through this plan. Commissioner Fischer said in his opinion at this point the City must "let go of the details", this plan is about direction. Concluding, Commissioner Fischer said what the City needs to do is choose a direction that defines us as a community.

Chair Lonsbury asked for from comments from the audience.

Mr. John Helling, 5616 Woodcrest Drive, addressed the Commission and expressed his support for the report. Mr. Helling said he has benefited financially from purchasing a house in Edina and pointed out that today many residents of the City could not afford to purchase the houses they live in. Mr. Helling acknowledged change can't be controlled but change can be influenced. Concluding, Mr. Helling said he believes Edina should provide lifecycle housing choices, not only for its residents but also for the community at large.

Ms. Sally Krusell, 6229 Hansen Road, told the Commission she moved to Edina as a single parent and raised her daughter, adding she would like other

single parents to be able to afford to live in Edina. It's a great place to live and raise children with a great school system.

Commissioner Brown said he agrees this is a very complicated issue, adding he supports finding ways to provide affordable housing for people. Commissioner Brown commented he just wants people to remember that Edina is very unique, and is not typical. Commissioner Brown pointed out Edina does not have an abundance of undeveloped land. It is fully developed which creates more challenges in providing affordable housing opportunities. Concluding Commissioner Brown said he is sensitive to this issue adding he appreciates all the work the task force has accomplished so far. Commissioner Brown stated at this time he just doesn't know the solution. He concluded the City Council has a big task ahead of them.

Commissioner Grabiell stated he agrees this is an important issue, adding at this time for him there are still too many questions. Commissioner Grabiell agreed this issue is very complicated adding at this time for him it is too big and too complicated to support or not support - to be against or for.

A discussion ensued with Commissioners again thanking members of the Housing Task Force for their excellent work and with Commissioners in agreement the Housing Succession Report is important.

Chair Lonsbury thanked Ms. Ming and Mr. Massie and all who served on the task force, adding the Commission appreciates all their hard work.

Discussion on the Massing Task Force – Cary Teague

Planner Teague addressed the Commission and informed them the Massing Task Force has submitted their report for Commission comment. Planner Teague said Edina Code already has some good tools to direct development and redevelopment, adding the Task Force has also suggested additional tools.

Commissioner Schroeder informed the Commission he was a member of the Massing Task Force, adding that serving on the task force was a challenge. Commissioner Schroeder said one question the task force struggled with was "if there is a massing problem out there", and if there is a problem-what is the problem, or do the few "bad examples" overshadow the high quality of work that is consistently found in Edina's residential neighborhoods. Continuing, Commissioner Schroeder said what the task force found was that many residents are upset about the construction process (from start to finish) and in many neighborhoods the process continues to move up and down the street.

Commissioner Schroeder said the continued remodeling and tear downs/re-builds in many of Edina's neighborhoods goes directly to the issue of "livable neighborhood". Concluding, Commissioner Schroeder explained the task force didn't want to launch headlong into amending the Zoning Ordinance, but to find ways to lessen the impact of change and continued construction.

Chair Lonsbury said at this point his intention is to assist the Council by focusing Commission comments on the five points recommended in the Massing Task Force Study.

1. *Mandatory neighborhood notification prior to permit letting. Property owners would be required to notify neighboring property owners of their intent to rebuild. Notification would include a perspective drawing. The City would not issue a building permit until the notification has taken place. The City would post drawings on the web.*

Comments from Commissioners:

Commissioner Brown said his observation is when it comes to notification the City should error on the side of "over communication". Commissioner Brown added every attempt should be made to ensure residents are involved in the process.

Commissioner Fischer agreed that every opportunity should be taken to ensure communication; however, at present there is no "formal" notification when a project meets Code. Commissioner Fischer said the posting of a sign may be a good way to communicate to neighbors a house is undergoing renovation or tear-down/ re-build.

Chair Lonsbury commented in his opinion neighbors could become frustrated if they are notified of a project, object to the project but since it meets Code there isn't anything they can do about it. Chair Lonsbury said in his opinion this needs further evaluation and public education.

2. *Neighborhood design education. Creation and support of an ongoing outreach program for neighborhood education and project review. Staffed by the City, volunteers, and possibly outside consultants, this group could create "neighborhood handbooks" tailored to the scale, history, style and setbacks of each neighborhood. This handbook could identify character-defining features for each neighborhood and how to meet modern needs while protecting them.*

Comments from Commissioners:

All Commissioners were in favor of implementing methods of educating residents on the City's Ordinances and processes.

3. *Neighborhood focus for comprehensive plan update. As part of the Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood geographic definition could be addressed. Upon completion, the zoning and building codes could be adjusted to address issues such as height, bulk, driveway coverage, and setback. Guidelines would be customized by lot size and neighborhood context. No restriction would be put on style, material or color.*

Comments from Commissioners:

Commissioner Staunton said in his experience residents express alarm when a dramatic change occurs in the neighborhood, adding change can be very emotional. Commissioner Staunton pointed out revisiting the Code in certain instances may be of benefit to the City. Continuing, Commissioner Staunton said one issue he has observed that can be very difficult and emotional is building height. He noted many things come into play when measuring building height. Grades can be manipulated with the end result a building dramatically higher than what previously existed. Concluding, Commissioner Staunton also noted increased building height and grade change are also issues that impact drainage. Commissioner Staunton said he supports really “digging into” this.

Chair Lonsbury agreed, adding how building height is measured could be revisited, adding measuring and averaging building height (similar to how the City determines front yard setback) may be a remedy.

Commissioner Scherer said it is also critical to her how these issues are folded into the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Scherer said in her experience many residents feel they don’t they have the ability to “weigh in” on issues that concern them.

4. *Voluntary neighborhood conservation districts.*
- 5.

Comments from Commissioners:

Commissioners agreed the City Attorney may need to render an opinion on legal issues associated with neighborhood conservation districts.

6. *Proactive residential construction oversight and regulation.*

Comments from Commissioners:

Commissioner Staunton agreed this is an issue for residents, adding it may be difficult to decipher if the issue is with an individual project or the fact that in certain neighborhoods it has become almost serial as projects and rebuilds continue to occur up and down the block. Commissioner Staunton noted many

residents may not have an issue with a specific project, but when neighborhoods are continually subjected to construction projects it becomes difficult to sort out what the real issue is.

Commissioner Fischer agreed this is an important issue, adding to a neighborhood continued construction means more “people” coming and going with Edina’s “fully developed” neighborhoods beginning to feel like brand new subdivisions.

Continued discussion ensued with Commissioners in agreement there are remedies that could be implemented to reduce the stress of “Massing”. Commissioners acknowledged the “Massing” issue is not new to Edina and that the entire Country appears to be “suffering” from this issue.

Audience comments:

Mr. Tom Anderson, 4603 Drexel Avenue informed the Commission on his block alone there are a number of reconstruction projects occurring simultaneously. Continuing, Mr. Anderson said in his opinion notification is critical. Mr. Anderson said setbacks are important, but equally as important is lot coverage. Mr. Anderson said presently Code treats driveways as open space, adding they aren’t considered when calculating lot coverage. Concluding, Mr. Anderson said the City should also look at maintaining neighborhood character, and better ways to inform residents of construction plans in their neighborhood.

Chair Lonsbury thanked Commissioners and residents for their comments on the Massing Task Force Study.

Comprehensive Plan Update – Dan Cornejo

Mr. Cornejo addressed the Commission and informed them URS was chosen as consultant to aid in the updating of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Cornejo said the City will also choose a consultant to help update the Transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan, adding at this time a decision has not been made on that consultant. Continuing, Mr. Cornejo stated staff intends to have a Comprehensive Plan “kick off” meeting on December 4, 2006, 6:30 PM at Braemar. Mr. Cornejo said the updated Comprehensive Plan needs to be adopted and is considered a legal document.

Mr. Cornejo told the Commission the Comprehensive Plan will define what type of community Edina wants to be, not only now but 5 to 15 years from now.

Mr. Cornejo said the Comprehensive Plan is also about people that “aren’t in the room”.

Commissioner Staunton asked what mechanisms would be used to let Edina residents know the Comprehensive Plan is in the process of being updated. Mr. Cornejo said residents will be informed of the process through different avenues, to include the City website, Sun-Current, etc. Concluding, Mr. Cornejo said staff is looking into the possibility of an interactive website and e-mail system.

Chair Lonsbury thanked Mr. Cornejo and stated updating the Comprehensive Plan is an important project with community involvement needed. Mr. Cornejo agreed.

Other Business:

Commissioner Staunton told the Commission he has become concerned with certain issues that have “cropped up” at zoning board meetings; one being tie votes and the other if an agenda item is denied can the applicant present the same plan to a different board to achieve a different outcome. Continuing, Commissioner Staunton said it would be helpful to have mechanisms in place to help channel some of the “vague” issues that occasionally crop up before the Zoning Board.

Chair Lonsbury agreed and explained at this time City staff is looking into conducting “training workshops” on different topics. It was discussed that these sessions would be conducted prior to Commission meetings. Chair Lonsbury said one topic of interest is variances including how they are handled at the different levels of government. Chair Lonsbury said he will speak with staff to setup future training schedules on topics that would help not only Commissioners but Zoning Board Members as well. Chair Lonsbury added in his opinion on certain topics Members of the Zoning Board and City Council could also be invited to attend.

Commissioner Fischer volunteered to help facilitate some of the training sessions.

Commissioner Grabiell said it also would be beneficial to have legal advice from the City Attorney on some of these issues. Chair Lonsbury agreed, concluding that he will speak with Planner Teague and maybe Planner Teague could clarify some of these points in the future.

VI. ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Scherer moved adjournment at 8:30 PM

Submitted by _____