

PLANNING COMMISSION

March 28, 2011

The City of Portage Planning Commission special meeting of March 28, 2011 was called to order by Chairman Cheesebro at 7:00 p.m. in Conference Room No. 1 of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. No citizens were in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Miko Dargitz, Wayne Stoffer, Rick Bosch, Paul Welch, Bill Patterson, Allan Reiff, Jim Pearson, Mark Siegfried and Chairman James Cheesebro.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

None.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services; Michael West, Assistant City Planner and Randall Brown, City Attorney

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

None.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None.

PLATS/RESIDENTIAL CONDOS:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinance Proposals. Mr. Forth referred the Commission to the previously provided March 11, 2011 staff report and the three mixed-use ordinance proposals referred by City Council and the Housing and Neighborhood Ad Hoc Committee. Mr. Forth discussed the origins for the three mixed-use ordinance proposals including the Portage 2025 Visioning project and the 2008 City Centre Area Plan. Mr. Forth and Attorney Brown stated changes to ordinance language and format would be forthcoming and asked that the Commission discussion focus on concepts contained in the three proposals. Mr. Forth and Attorney Brown indicated the Commission would have opportunities to comment on specific ordinance language at future meetings.

Mr. Forth began with a review of the City Centre Area (CCA) – Mixed Use Floating Zone, a voluntary, incentive-based floating zone that could be initiated by a property owner or developer in a manner similar to the PD, planned development district. Mr. Forth stated the detailed plan area portion of the City Centre Area encompasses approximately 175 acres and then reviewed areas where redevelopment was likely to occur. Commissioner Pearson asked for the rationale behind the ten acre minimum project area provision contained in the draft language. Mr. Forth stated the ten acre provision was intended to encourage a larger, more coordinated form of development and would likely require parcel assemblage and redevelopment activities. Mr. Forth also indicated the ordinance contains a provision whereby City Council can waive the ten acre minimum. The Commission discussed the pros and cons of the ten acre minimum standard, redevelopment areas within the CCA where ten acres could be readily assembled and whether a reduction to a five acre minimum project area would be more appropriate. The Commission next discussed the differences between the CCA and older, more urban communities where integrated commercial/residential development has occurred. Commissioner Pearson stated he believes the CCA needs to include a “catalyst” such as a large feature, landmark and/or building to help encourage development. Commissioner Welch asked what incentives were being offered with the proposed ordinance. Mr. Forth discussed the various incentives including allowance for residential uses in the commercial development, reduced building setbacks, no maximum lot coverage and no building height restrictions. Commissioner Reiff asked why the ordinance only allowed for one type of outdoor lighting (Shepard’s hook). Mr. Forth stated the intent was to establish a consistent and unifying theme. Mr. Forth concluded with a short description of the project review and approval process.

Mr. Forth reviewed the Commercial Corridor Mixed-Use (CCMU) Floating Zone, another voluntary, incentive-based floating zone that could be initiated by a property owner or developer in a manner similar to the PD, planned development district. Mr. Forth stated the CCMU zone would allow for up to 20% residential land use in any of the business zoning districts (B-1, B-2, B-3, CPD and OS-1 zones) located within a designated commercial corridor or primary/secondary commercial node. Mr. Forth indicated the CCMU could not be applied to any property located within the CCA. Mr. Forth stated a five acre minimum project area was required in the CCMU zone and briefly reviewed the site development incentives including integration of residential land use, mixed use buildings and reduced building setbacks. Mr. Forth concluded with a short description of the project review and approval process. At this time, the Commission did not have any comments on the CCMU Floating Zone.

Mr. Forth reviewed the Work/Live Accommodations (WLA) ordinance and its applicability in the business zoning districts (B-1, B-2, B-3, CPD and OS-1 zones). Mr. Forth reviewed the general provisions of the WLA proposal and stated it would be allowed as a special land use subject to Planning Commission review and approval after a public hearing. Commissioner Pearson suggested modification to Section 42-137.A to allow the living quarters to be occupied by the owner of the business and/or employee. The Commission concurred that additional flexibility should be built into the living quarters section of the ordinance. The Commission then also discussed allowing the living area to be more than 1/3 of the total floor area, possibly up to 50%. Mr. Forth discussed the intent of the WLA ordinance not to allow the living quarters to be rented or leased to any individual, but rather provide flexibility to the owner of the business to also live at the premises. Attorney Brown suggested allowing him and the staff to consider a broader scope of options for the living quarters portion of the WLA ordinance. The Commission and staff discussed various sections of the proposal including the provision that prevented the business portion of the use from being situated on a floor above the residential portion of the use.

At the conclusion of the Commission review, Mr. Forth indicated that staff and the City Attorney would consider Commission comments and make appropriate modifications to the proposals and schedule another special meeting for future Commission discussion in either April or May.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Forth, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services