

Mt. Pleasant Planning Commission
Minutes of Work Session
September 5, 2013

Present: Brockman, Cotter, Dailey, Hoenig, Kostrzewa, Quast, Shellady, Smith (Chair).

Absent: Holtgreive (Vice-Chair).

Staff: Bean, Mrdeza, Murphy.

Bean briefed the Commission on the issues he wanted to discuss during the work session:

- Follow up discussion on M-2 Land Use info
- Master Plan Prioritization of Goals
- Downtown Goals/priorities, based on public input
- Next Steps

M-2 Discussion:

Bean shared the various maps of the M-2 areas, showing the existing zoning; future land use designations; rental information etc., noting that the M-2 zoning district is primarily residential uses.

Discussion ensued on the existing line and whether it should be moved.

- Currently the district line runs through blocks/alleys in some areas, without even a road to buffer the M-2 from R zoning districts.
 - Chairman Smith noted that when the line was created, it was placed around the existing M-2 uses.
 - Commissioner Quast stated the "line" needs to be thicker to create more of a buffer.
 - Commissioner Cotter agreed that there needs to be more buffer, noting a "bulls-eye" effect, with the more density in the center and then fanning out, i.e., rooming dwellings, multi-family units, duplexes, s-f rentals and then owner occupied.
 - Chairman Smith noted that this seems to be already happening, referring to the rental map that shows most of the homes surrounding the M-2 district have become rentals over time. The buffer is taking care of itself.
 - Commissioner Quast suggested requiring more landscaping to give the area a more residential feel.

Bean noted that the M-2 allows rooming dwellings, and lot size dictates the number of occupants. It was noted that there are several rooming dwellings that were there prior to the current Zoning Ordinance.

Bean noted that future land use map is consistent with the M-2 line. Staff also noted that 73% of the rentals in the M-2 district are rooming dwellings.

Discussion took place on the need to create more housing for young professionals and young families.

Further discussion ensued on how to incentivize this type of development.

Commissioner Brockman noted that Conditional Rezoning was created to help address some of the issues; however, feels that the City Commission has not been real receptive to this. Brockman also commented that as CMU enrollment goes down, the need for off-campus housing will also decrease, further noting that developers will build to meet the market demands.

Bean agreed that the market has a lot to do with what we are seeing in the M-2 zoning district, noting that students want to live close to the University. He also noted that there is a process in place to address the need for re-development (M-2 Redevelopment Procedures).

Commissioner Quast asked staff if there was a way to have an informal meeting with developers, landlords etc. Commissioner Dailey noted you would need to assure you did not violate Open Meeting rules.

Commissioner Cotter noted you would need to have a goal for the meeting, rather than just discussion. Mrdeza agreed that you would need have a good focus and also noted that if you have an open forum, there is an expectation from participants that you are going to address their issues.

Bean noted there appears to be some highly divergent opinions on how to address the issues in the M-2 area. He further noted that as an outsider, he keeps hearing about the issues; however, noted that the "issues" have not been clearly defined.

Commissioner Shellady commented that we are dealing with a transient entity and demographic shifts and questioned what it would take to lower barriers. Commissioner Shellady further commented that if we do not agree internally, it will not do any good to open the discussion up to the public.

Following discussion, Chairman Smith noted he is becoming more confident that we should not move the line, as there has been a buffer naturally created and if we move the line, it will erase the buffer and we will have to start over.

Next Steps:

Bean noted that based on the discussion, the M-2 Zoning district will remain on the priority list. It was suggested that the Board focus on their top three priorities and address the others as needed and as time permits.

Bean noted that the next step in the Master Plan process is to look at how the Non-Motorized Transportation plan fits in.

Mrdeza provided an update on the M-2 Redevelopment codification process. Rowe Engineering is currently under contract and is reviewing past practices and gathering information. They have requested that the ZBA and PC set up a joint meeting to discuss.

Downtown Priorities:

Bean provided an updated list based on comments in July, noting that public comments support the current goals.

Mrdeza asked if more discussion is needed to encourage upper story residential. Quast stated she does not feel like that is an issue as there is a very low vacancy rate downtown.

Brockman agreed that the vacancy rate is low. He suggested trying to entice more of a retail mix to the downtown, further suggesting looking into grants to incent owners to fix up their buildings.

It was also noted that Bean should contact Michelle Sponseller for an updated list of DDB goals.

New Planning Director:

Mrdeza provided an update on where we are at in the interview process.

Motion by Brockman, support by Quast to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

bam