

ITEM #: 54
DATE: 05-14-24
DEPT: P&H

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: PLANNING DIVISION WORK PLAN 2024

BACKGROUND:

City Council was provided a status update of projects related to the Planning Division work plan on October 24, 2023. Staff noted at that time that many projects would be concluded in the winter and that prioritization of new projects could wait until the spring.

Since the October meeting, staff has completed several outstanding projects and City Council has made additional referrals and adopted new City Council Goals. **Attached to this report is a list of status updates for projects that are currently on the Work Plan.**

Current projects that are underway or have a defined upcoming next step include the following:

ID# Project Description

- 1 Downtown Plan Partnership with Ames Main Street
- 2 The Linc Development- Lincoln Way
- 3 Reinvestment District Final Application
- 5 Townhome Infill Housing Building Type Zoning Text Amendment
- 10 Rezoning process for West Towne mixed use and affordable housing units
- 11 Identify priority Infill- Redirection Areas
- 12 Burgason Cedar Lane Paving Waiver Request and Pioneer Infrastructure Definition
- 13 Housing Task Force development review and incentives letter (*Three Referrals, URA, Conservation Subdivision, Pioneer Infrastructure*)
- 15 Administrative exceptions to zoning standards with staff approval (20% rule)
- 25 Chautauqua Ridgewood Neighborhood National Register Historic District Application (State Grant Approved)
- 29 Harrison Road Surplus Land Infill Development Option Report
- 30 Council Goal-Task AG1.T3 DRC Process review and performance metrics

As City Council looks forward to the next 12-18 months there are many choices for adding new priorities with different levels of staff hours committed to each project.

Unique to this discussion is the decision of whether to prioritize a comprehensive rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance that addresses multiple issues at one time. Staff believes this rewrite is warranted based upon implementation priorities of Plan 2040 and to address a needed update of commercial zoning standards. Although the full scope of changes and outreach is not known, staff estimates an 18-month duration to accomplish a Zoning Ordinance rewrite.

The Zoning Ordinance rewrite may or may not require retaining a consultant, depending on the format of the zoning ordinance desired as well as the issues and priorities identified to address by the City Council, **If Council chooses to prioritize a Zoning Ordinance update, the first step is to have a**

workshop describing different zoning and subdivision code formats and to define the issues and priorities to be addressed with an update.

One concern with pursuing the Zoning Ordinance update first is that a number of other zoning issues that the City Council had hoped to be addressed will have to be delayed until the Zoning Ordinance update is completed. For example, the East 13th Street property developer Elwell requested that Council consider changing the Zoning Overlay and Development Agreement to remove the influence of the regional mall on its standards. Staff was supportive in January of addressing this request and including it with a general commercial zoning update or as a separate project since it is expected to facilitate property tax base expansion. However, at that time, a whole zoning update was not contemplated. Other Council goals may not be able to be addressed as well.

ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE OPTION:

Staff suggests first determining if there is any interest in pursuing the Zoning Ordinance Update and setting a timeframe for it to begin. A comprehensive update allows for multiple issue to be addressed in coordinated manner over a longer period of time. **If there are specific requests/projects that Council would like to address sooner than the Zoning Ordinance update, staff suggests that Council exclude these issues from the update if either: 1) there is an immediate need, or 2) the issue is novel and requires some specific outreach approach that is not appropriate with a broad update.**

A comprehensive Zoning Ordinance update could efficiently address the following types of projects that are either existing referrals or suggested with Plan 2040 Implementation:

1. Complete Streets Standards/Subdivision Code Updates (Including Walk Bike Roll Plan)(ID# 4)
2. Create a Corridor Zoning District for Lincoln Way (ID#21)
3. General rewrite of commercial zoning districts and standards, including gateway overlays (ID#21)
4. General clean up of standards and simplify tables for uses and development standards
5. Updates to general standards of development, such as lighting, landscaping, parking as needed
6. Update of Zoning for FS areas related to housing density and building types (growth areas) (ID#9)
- (ID#7)
7. Incorporate general infill design standards (ID#21)
8. Other green building or sustainable development requirements (ID#23)
9. Park land dedication ordinance requirements(ID#21)
10. Sign Code update and coordination with zoning (ID#18)

The general update to the Zoning Ordinance would likely not address specific sub- area plans for redirection areas that need to be tailored to a specific area. These types of projects would remain in the category of infill and redirection areas as separate work plan items.

If City Council initiates the overall Zoning Ordinance update process and desires to begin in the Fall of 2024, staff believes one larger Redirection Area could still be prioritized along with one or two other larger projects over the next 18 months. The other ongoing projects would also be completed, Downtown Plan, Chataqua Historic District, AEDC housing taskforce items.

DEFER ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE OPTION:

If City Council does not plan to initiate a Zoning Ordinance rewrite this year, then it will need to

address specific projects in the work plan. In this instance, staff would suggest 3-6 projects for the next 12 months. Project ideas would include those on the Work Plan list as well as Plan 2040 Implementation measures included within Attachment B.

Some of these items may begin as early as this summer, but most would be started in the fall or winter as staff works through some of the ongoing projects. **Major projects for this summer include completing the AEDC housing task force related items, initiating the Chautauqua Historic District Project, and working with Ames Main Street on the Downtown Plan.** Other miscellaneous text amendment issues are also in process.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Prioritize the following tasks in the order below:

- a) Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Update and establish a timeframe to initiate the project
- b) One redirection area (as determined by City Council), and
- c) Completion of 1-2 other priorities (as determined by City Council)

Staff would recommend that one of these two projects include the Elwell Property Commercial Zoning amendment request, a minimum of one Redirection Area (TBD), and other City Council priorities.

2. Defer prioritizing a Comprehensive Zoning Update and identify a total of 3-6 additional projects for prioritization for the next 12 months.

Staff would recommend that one these projects include the Elwell Property Commercial Zoning amendment request, a minimum of one Redirection Area (TBD), and other City Council priorities.

3. Prioritize other projects.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

City Council is being asked to identify its top priorities for many large and complex issues identified in the work plan. **Compared to prior years, at this time there appears to be only one significant outstanding developer request that requires a new prioritization decision (#29-Elwell 13th Street properties change in zoning standards).**

Staff believes that the best approach is to first decide whether undertaking a Zoning Ordinance update is a priority and, if so, when to initiate that process. This kind of update can address many of the outstanding issues in the work plan, along with addressing frequent sticking points for development projects. **Due to the benefits of the addressing multiple issues efficiently with a zoning update, staff believes that option has the most long-term value to the City. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1, as described above.**

However, taking on this Zoning Ordinance update comes with the tradeoff of being a significant time commitment. Many of the existing items on the workplan which the Council has hoped to address for some time will not be able to be completed within the next eighteen months.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Attachment B.docx](#)

[Work Plan 2024 2025 List.pdf](#)