

**MINUTES
CITY OF AMES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Date: September 7, 2016	Debra Lee, Chairperson	2018
	Matt Converse, Vice Chairperson	2018
Call to Order: 7:00 PM	Carlton Basmajian	2017
	Rob Bowers	2018
Place: Ames City Hall Council Chambers	Anuprit Minhas	2019
	Doug Ragaller	2019
Adjournment: 9:58 PM	Yvonne Wannemuehler	2018

CALL TO ORDER: Debra Lee, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (Converse/Ragaller) to approve the September 7, 2016 meeting agenda

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF August 3, 2016:

MOTION: (Bowers/Ragaller) to approve the August 3, 2016 meeting minutes

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

PUBLIC FORUM: There were no public comments.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE MAJOR SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AMENDMENT FOR 3505 AND 3515 LINCOLN WAY (WALNUT RIDGE)

Case Planner Karen Marren reviewed the amendment request for the Major Site Development Plan approved by the City Council in September 2015 to allow for development of a commercial and residential mixed-use development on the subject properties. The property owners, Turn Key Investments, LLC and Chuck Winkleblack, requested approval of a revision to the Landscape Plan to achieve the intent of the code for screening by using an alternative planting plan in lieu of strict conformance to L2 and L3 standards. City Council may approve a Landscape Plan that does not meet strict requirements of the zoning code if it determines the plan meets the purposes of the code. The applicant request included removal of parking lot screening along the west property line due to a retaining wall that limits space and soil depth for plantings. Other proposed revisions include areas along the north and east property lines to screen the parking lot with a six-foot wood fence and a mixture of grasses, shrubs, and lower-height trees. Staff found the proposed Landscape Plan amendment did not meaningfully affect the project aesthetic or function, met the screening intent of the Zoning Ordinance, and did not impact overall approval of the site plan.

Yvonne Wannemuehler asked for clarification on the height of the retaining wall along with west property line. Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann explained that the wall is seven feet in height and noted grade changes from the rear of the building on Parcel A to the alley entrance on the north side of the property. Ms. Wannemuehler observed that the proposed change would substitute a seven-foot retaining wall for three-foot plantings.

Chuck Winkleblack, Hunziker Companies, 105 South 16th Street, described the requested plan alterations as practical adaptations to address overstory trees located beneath overhead electrical lines, utilize and extend existing fencing, and plant native grasses and other plantings more likely to be sustainable and attractive in areas with limited space and soil depth.

Carlton Basmajian asked why the proposed changes were not anticipated. Mr. Winkleblack replied that sites can sometime be different on paper than in reality, and that plans may need to be adjusted to address factors such as grade changes, where to pile snow, and plant survival.

MOTION: (Bowers/Wannemuehler) to accept **Alternative #1**, which states: that the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council **approve** the Major Site Development Plan Amendment for 3505 and 3515 Lincoln Way to allow for the proposed revision to the Landscape Plan with the following condition: The developer is responsible for construction and maintenance of the six-foot fence along all residential property lines.

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

Kelly Diekmann stated this item would appear on the September 27, 2016 City Council agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE REZONING OF 2728 LINCOLN WAY, 112 AND 114 SOUTH HYLAND AVENUE, AND 115 SOUTH SHELDON AVENUE

In July 2016, the Commission recommended approval of a Land Use Policy Plan amendment request from River Caddis Development to change the land use designation to allow development of a six story mixed-use concept. The developer described plans for a 20-room hotel, commercial uses, a residential lobby, leasing offices, amenity spaces, and approximately 500 bedrooms. Case Planner Karen Marren indicated the current request involved rezoning four properties from Residential High Density (RH) and University West Impact Overlay (O-UIW) to Campustown Service Center (CSC) to match existing CSC zoning of other properties included in the proposed development. Approval of the request would align the property zoning with the LUPP amendment approved by the City Council in August 2016. Utility infrastructure and capacity assessments were noted. Storm water management plans would be included in a Minor Site Development Plan, the next step in the approval process. Staff's RH Site Evaluation Matrix scored the subject properties as highly-rated infill. Staff recommended approval of the rezoning request.

Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann noted correspondence from two neighborhood residents, Sarah Cady and Mike Robinson, who expressed reservations about the proposed rezoning and mixed-use development due to its impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Carlton Basmajian asked for additional staff comment on sewer and water infrastructure review, specifically about projected deficiencies in the main trunk line along Lincoln Way. Kelly Diekmann explained that the Public Works Department's ongoing evaluation found sewer infrastructure serving Lincoln Way and the area to the south to be at or near capacity. The City Council approved water and sewer infrastructure upgrades, if deemed necessary to serve development along Lincoln Way. Staff confirmed that the proposed project was sized consistently with capacity expectations. Further infrastructure reviews would follow the Lincoln Way Corridor Study.

Yvonne Wannemuehler noted low scores for the subject site on the RH Site Evaluation Matrix for public utilities and preservation of natural features. Ms. Marren explained that the utility scoring occurred before development concepts and current infrastructure assessments were known. The

site will likely have lot-line-to-lot-line development, although the concept includes potential for street trees. Mr. Diekmann pointed out that staff believed there are no resources on the site that need to be maintained—no natural features would be kept and nothing important would be lost.

Debra Lee and Ms. Wannemuehler spoke about parking in the area. Ms. Wannemuehler was concerned that the proposed development would exacerbate existing parking problems.

Chuck Winkleblack, Hunziker Companies, 105 South 16th Street, appeared representing River Caddis Development. He indicated the current request was intended to bring the property zoning in line with the LUPP land use. He offered to answer questions—there were none.

Jay Adams, Adams Property Management, 248 Village Drive, owns three properties west of the proposed development. His properties are located at 2812 Lincoln Way, and 103 and 109 South Hyland Avenue. He expressed two major concerns: (1) Parking. He stated that removing RH zoning would eliminate the 1.25 parking spaces per bedroom requirement, thereby flooding the surrounding streets with parking. He noted the area streets are already filled with cars 24/7, with students and others frequently parking illegally, leading to ticketing and towing. (2) Transition. He sought a buffer from lower- to higher-density development. The proposed mixed-use development would result in a six story building, built from lot line to lot line, with no transition to the neighboring lower-density residential properties.

Sharon Stewart, 437 Hilltop Road, questioned the timing of approving the proposed rezoning in light of the Lincoln Way Corridor Study. She believed decisions about development along Lincoln Way should wait until the study is completed. She also expressed concern about the lack of setback requirements for the proposed mixed-use development.

Erin Carpenter, 2901 Arbor Street, supported redevelopment in the area but worried about inadequate setbacks and noted being uncomfortable walking along the existing sidewalks, where accidents occur several times annually. The lack of buffer between high density and residential development also troubled her. She shared concerns about the proposed amenity deck and associated noise pollution. She lives across from the ISU Arboretum and described the area as a very residential neighborhood whose occupants would oppose traffic increases and more parking problems. She was forced to have vehicles towed from her own driveway in the past.

Anuprit Minhas inquired about typical landscaping requirements for this kind of development. Kelly Diekmann reported Campustown has no landscaping requirements except for surface parking lots. With the proposed development, there would be a required five-foot minimum landscape along South Hyland Avenue, a 10-foot setback along the south property line, and a small green space between the proposed parking structure entrance and the street along Sheldon Avenue.

Mr. Basmajian asked if staff reviewed a more detailed site plan and asked for clarification on the size of the proposed hotel. Mr. Diekmann indicated staff saw multiple iterations of the concept. The 100-room hotel concept was deemed Infeasible in August and was discarded in favor of the smaller 20-room boutique hotel concept. At this time staff does not have a fully vetted plan on file.

Sidewalk dimensions were discussed following questions from Mr. Basmajian regarding CSC standards. Mr. Diekmann stated rezoning to CSC would not change sidewalk requirements, per se, because there is only a set amount of right-of-way to work with. He said staff believed the developer will seek a development agreement, which would add a layer of requirements beyond standard zoning requirements. Staff urged the City Council to go beyond the existing 8 feet to widen the sidewalk to 13 feet, closer to the 15-foot width expected for Campustown. The minimum

10-foot depth may be widened to 13 feet along Lincoln Way, with the other frontages on South Hyland Avenue and South Sheldon Avenue varying due to lack of uniform right-of-ways.

Ms. Minhas asked how the proposed development fits with the ongoing Lincoln Way Corridor Study. Mr. Diekmann said that was a key conversation point during the LUPP amendment review. The consultant and staff were comfortable the development would not affect the Corridor plan.

Ms. Lee agreed with redeveloping the block and saw efficiencies of higher population density in Campustown. She also shared the concerns voiced by neighborhood residents regarding a six-story building without a transition to neighboring properties. Given these concerns she did not feel comfortable approving rezoning without including conditions related to setbacks, parking, amenity deck, etc., or taking it on faith that a development agreement would address these issues. Mr. Diekmann said other recent large-scale Campustown projects relied on property tax abatement, so there is an assumption the developer will pursue the financial incentive package to guide development. However, some elements could be addressed in a contract rezoning, if necessary.

Parking requirements were reviewed, with Ms. Wannemuehler recalling that the developer had previously indicated the project would not proceed unless less parking were required. It seemed problematic to her to have businesses and residents in the development with the developer providing as little parking as it could. Mr. Diekmann said this developer was following the model of what Campustown permits and what was done for the last three mixed-use residential projects in area. Ms. Wannemuehler responded that following a model does not address a parking problem that would worsen by bringing more people into the area. Ms. Lee added that the other mixed use projects were interior to Campustown, not on the border of a residential area, as in this case.

Chuck Winkleblack recalled surveying the other mixed-use projects and finding they did not have all of the parking spots filled in the building within the one-space-per-unit requirement. A number of students do not have a car at all or choose to park elsewhere (e.g., stadium) because a car is not regularly needed, an attractive element of living close to campus, he argued.

Ms. Lee asked if there was Commission interest in crafting a conditional recommendation, would those concerns be covered in a way leading to possibility of action. Mr. Diekmann replied that the Commission would need to articulate clear expectations for contract rezoning reasonably related to rezoning, and the developer would have to agree to enter into that contract before the City Council held a public hearing on the rezoning request. Mr. Basmajian asked if any future development agreement could then supersede Commission conditions. Mr. Diekmann said a contract rezoning cannot be undone without a subsequent rezoning action. In contrast, a development agreement is an agreement between the City Council and the developer that would not come back to the Commission for possible alterations.

Doug Ragaller pointed out the ISU Intermodal Facility is about two blocks away from the subject site and appears to be a “ghost town” whenever he drives by the facility. Mr. Diekmann said the Intermodal facility offers reserved parking along with metered spaces available to the general public. He acknowledged it is an under-used resource.

Ms. Lee regarded Campustown parking issues as separate from issues specific to the subject development, notably building height, setbacks, and an amenity deck. Mr. Diekmann explained that zoning does not specifically address outdoor recreation or amenity feature standards—that would be a conversation staff would have with the City Council more than with the Commission.

Rob Bowers expressed concern about the Commission presenting a conflicting message that infill is desirable but then opposing efforts for infill development. In this case, staff rated the subject

site as good for infill development. He granted it may not be perfect and that there may be a need for trade-offs. Ms. Lee agreed and said she had often made the case in the community against sprawl, understanding there may be a price for infill. In this case she was concerned with transition and would have liked to provide a step-down from a six-story tower.

Mr. Basmajian said the key is not either/or with infill, but details. With the proposed development, he thought the timing was off and decisions should be postponed until the Lincoln Way Corridor Study was finished. In his view, there is no natural stopping point for development—decisions allow or prohibit development. Development of the subject site is inevitable because the property is too valuable. Zoning is when you have control—after that, little can be done, he stated.

MOTION: (Ragaller/Converse) to accept **Alternative #1**, which states: that the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council **approve** the request for rezoning from Residential High Density (RH) with the University West Impact Overlay (O-UIW) to Campustown Service Center (CSC).

MOTION FAILED: (3-4); Opposed: Lee, Wannemuehler, Basmajian, Minhas

Mr. Diekmann asked if there was an alternative motion.

MOTION: (Wannemuehler/Basmajian) to recommend that the City Council **defer** action on the request for rezoning from Residential High Density (RH) with the University West Impact Overlay (O-UIW) to Campustown Service Center (CSC) until the results of the Lincoln Way Corridor Study are available.

MOTION PASSED: (4-3); Opposed: Bowers, Converse, Ragaller

Kelly Diekmann stated this item would appear on the September 27, 2016 City Council agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE REZONING OF 3115, 3119, 3303, 3409 AND 3414 SOUTH DUFF AVENUE (BRICK TOWNE)

Dickson and Luann Jensen, property owners, requested rezoning to enable development of 500-700 apartment units along with commercial uses. Case Planner Charlie Kuester reviewed the site location and current zoning designations--four parcels are Highway-Oriented Commercial (HOC) and two are Agriculture (A). The applicant requested rezoning most of the site to Residential High Density (RH) and retaining HOC for the property's northern frontage along South Duff Avenue. The six parcels will eventually be reconfigured to reflect zoning boundaries and development lots. Mr. Kuester recalled the Commission's recent action on a Land Use Policy Plan amendment, later approved by the City Council. Two major concerns at previous reviews were the impact of the proposed development on traffic and storm water. Staff and the developer have identified projects to address current and projected deficiencies and will negotiate the obligations for each party via a development agreement. The rezoning request was accompanied by a Master Plan identifying unit types, density based upon gross acreage, and areas for commercial zoning.

Mr. Kuester described three proposed access points, including a primary access with a signalized intersection in line with Crystal Street, and two secondary access points without traffic signals. The Master Plan does not identify natural areas to preserve, floodplains, or environmentally sensitive areas. Noted traffic study findings and recommended improvements included: a signalized intersection at the Crystal Street and US Highway 69 intersection, a three lane cross section along US Highway 69 extended to Ken Maril Road, an additional left turn lane from Airport Road to South Duff Avenue, shared use path and sidewalk extensions along South Duff Avenue,

and a signalized intersection at the South Duff Avenue and US Highway 30 eastbound offramp. Recommendations from the Tea Garden storm water study and further analysis by the developer determined storm water management improvements needed to mitigate existing runoff issues and to manage increased runoff from the proposed development. Other sewer, water, and electrical infrastructure capacities were noted. RH Site Evaluation Matrix scoring changed little since the LUPP amendment review. Overall, the site received mixed results. Staff's recommended approval of the rezoning included conditions needed to support development to be outlined in a contract rezoning or development agreement.

Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann provided additional information on the RH Site Evaluation Matrix scoring. The Master Plan did not identify natural features to preserve. The 'low' staff ranking on this criterion reflected necessary site modifications for storm water requirements. (A contract rezoning would require area reserved for storm water to meet flooding issues). With this site, scoring was complicated by what the Master Plan proposes versus checklist rankings for preservation and storm water management. Carlton Basmajian asked if the matrix was redone since the LUPP review. Mr. Kuester indicated it was reexamined but scoring changed little.

Debra Lee inquired about proposed sidewalk extensions on the west side of South Duff Avenue. Mr. Kuester reported there would be no extension south beyond the proposed development—the developer's obligation is its own frontage and the frontage of the cemetery the development would wrap around on three sides. Previous agreements with commercial property owners to the north are in place for sidewalk construction, and the City will explore options for extending sidewalk to Airport Road and beyond, if possible. On the east side of South Duff Avenue, the traffic study recommended extending the shared use path to Jewel Drive. Mr. Basmajian asked if the cemetery is active or a historic, closed cemetery. Mr. Kuester indicated it is a functioning cemetery.

Doug Ragaller questioned the 'Investment/Catalyst' evaluation matrix criterion. Mr. Diekmann stated it could be argued that the proposed development would not create a sense of place or add to the character of the community at large because it would be removed from public space with a private circulation system. Mr. Ragaller and Mr. Diekmann discussed the developer's intention to create a sense of place within the project itself.

Luke Jensen, 2519 Chamberlain Street, appeared representing Dickson and Luanne Jensen. The developers have worked on this project with various stakeholders for two years and were excited to proceed to the rezoning step to align the proposed project with the recently-amended LUPP land use designation. Their focus has been on developing high-quality housing for an underserved market, i.e, 1- or 2-bedroom workforce housing units. In Mr. Jensen's view, this project has a lot of public benefit and will be a catalyst to solve known traffic and storm water problems in the area—or at least not worsen them—to benefit the developer, area residents, and the City. He encouraged the Commission to move Alternative #1 to recommend rezoning approval.

Mr. Diekmann clarified Alternative #1 in staff's report was written as if a development agreement were not reached so it would be clear the developer has obligations to make the proposed project work. Staff envisioned a win-win scenario whereby the City and developer would likely swap storm water for roadway improvements and assign each party's responsibilities to complete the agreed upon improvements more quickly. The ideas for these improvements are captured in the staff report conditions. Obligations for each party would be negotiated in a development agreement prior to City Council review, he explained.

The size of the development was questioned by Mr. Basmajian, whether it was 500-700 units or bedrooms. Mr. Jensen stated the proposal called for 521 one-bedroom units and 79 two-bedroom

units, yielding 500-700 bedrooms. Mr. Basmajian observed that the development could house 1,000 or more people, potentially. He wondered how that would solve a traffic problem.

The development would create a significant number of one-bedroom apartments, Ms. Lee stated. Mr. Jensen agreed and pointed out that much of the City's apartment construction in the last 25 years focused on group living with 3- and 4-bedroom units. Since one bedroom new construction fell off, now there is a need and demand for that housing product. According to Mr. Diekmann, staff supported the proposed development as a housing type staff had not seen for a while to rectify a distortion in the market favoring multi-bedroom unit construction. Mr. Basmajian asked who tends to occupy one-bedroom apartments. Mr. Jensen reported the occupants are, in his experience, a diverse pool of tenants representing a wide spectrum of community members.

Justin Dodge, Hunziker Companies, 105 South 16th Street, supported the proposed project. He emphasized the impact of flooding and damage on Southdale area residents. He recalled visiting with many residents and learning that storm water was their biggest concern. Mr. Dodge was excited that a lot of the flooding issues would be addressed because of the proposed project.

Yvonne Wannemuehler recalled from previous reviews that the City already had plans to address known storm water problems independent of the proposed development. Mr. Kuester indicated the City has funds budgeted in its Capital Improvements Project (CIP) to implement Tea Garden study recommendations. The proposed project represents an opportunity to partner with the developer to create a joint, holistic solution, perhaps with cost savings. If the project does not proceed, the City has funds and plans to make improvements in the area, he confirmed.

Ms. Lee asked about traffic improvements without approval of the proposed development. Mr. Diekmann stated traffic control improvements would not necessarily occur in the near term—they are not in the CIP for next five years--without being accelerated by the development.

The site's RH Site Evaluation Matrix scoring results did not look positive to Mr. Basmajian—more low- than high scores. He questioned how seriously scoring factored into recommendations. Mr. Diekmann stated the question of the site's suitability for residential development was answered at the LUPP stage. The zoning review is about whether this is the time for development. Due to commitments for infrastructure improvements, staff said it can be built now. Mr. Kuester pointed out that site evaluation criteria are not weighted and it is up to the Commission to determine which factors are most significant. The evaluation matrix does not address overall City housing needs, Mr. Diekmann added, or if there is a more suitable site to address an identified housing need if the subject site were deemed unsuitable. The evaluation matrix is meant to disclose attributes to be considered, but it is almost always a case-by-case evaluation to judge the merits of a site.

Ms. Lee shared surprise at positive neighborhood response to the development—she expected resistance but found eagerness for projects to bring improvements to known problems. In contrast, Ms. Wannemuehler reported negative reactions due to concerns about increased traffic.

Mr. Basmajian wondered if adding 1,000 cars would offset infrastructure improvements. Mr. Diekmann replied that additional traffic volume would be mitigated by improvements that would increase capacity beyond additional demands generated by the proposed development. Since the property already has HOC zoning, traffic increases well beyond 1,000 cars could also be realized with non-residential development, he advised.

Mr. Ragaller spoke about the housing type the proposed development would provide and the impact it could have on attracting additional Ames residents as well as retaining current Ames

residents who may otherwise need to look elsewhere for housing. Matt Converse spoke of the benefit to the City from capturing some of the thousands who currently commute to work in Ames.

Ms. Lee recalled discussions from the LUPP review and stated that although the subject site may not be ideal, she was unsure of an alternative, better location for development, or the converse of how else the land would be used if not for the proposed development. She noted it has been available as a potential commercial development area for a long time and nothing had come of it. Mr. Basmajian speculated that outcome may be a reflection of the commercial market.

MOTION: (Ragaller/Bowers) to accept **Alternative #1**, which states: that the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council **approve** the request for rezoning from Agriculture and Highway-Oriented Commercial to High-Density Residential and Highway-Oriented Commercial with the attached Master Plan and a contract rezoning further obligating the property owner to design any amenity features and complete infrastructure improvements at the sole cost of the developer, as outlined in items A-G.

MOTION PASSED: (5-2); Opposed: Wannemuehler; Basmajian

Kelly Diekmann stated this item would likely appear on the September 27, 2016 City Council agenda.

LANDSCAPE STANDARDS REVIEW (STAFF PRESENTATION)

Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann and Assistant Planner Justin Moore provided background on City Council referrals and goals related to landscape ordinance improvements. Staff updated the Commission on 2016 initiatives, including work with Confluence, a Des Moines landscape architect consultant. During 2016, several workshops were held with stakeholders to identify concerns, perceived shortcomings, and suggestions for improvements in the landscape ordinance. The consensus was that current requirements were not meeting most people's interests, including staff's, and something could be done to improve the process and standards.

Staff provided the Commission with a draft proposal of a point-based landscape scoring system and gave an overview presentation on the City's landscape ordinance and proposed alterations. Staff reviewed the scope of the landscape ordinance update and summarized the intent of new landscaping standards and the draft point-based scoring system. Major topics included:

- Current basic L1, L2, and L3 landscape standards
- Landscape ordinance update improvements
- Categories and scoring for the draft point-based scoring system

Staff displayed photos from various sites to illustrate possibilities if design were the objective versus mandatory screening. Noted landscape enhancement elements included diversity; sustainability; native plantings; and installation, soil quality, and maintenance. Staff explained the requirements of the draft landscape scoring system as well as findings when the scoring system was applied to existing L1 and L2 sites across the City. Staff also reviewed recently approved projects to see how changes would enhance site scoring as well as mock-up sites to compare scores from the current ordinance versus the point-based scoring system.

Mr. Diekmann commented on the prescriptive nature of the current landscape ordinance and lack of reward for innovation or diversity. Staff sought a system that rewarded design enhancements and creation of successful landscaping on the front end of projects that would succeed without

recurring review or enforcement. The intention is to incentivize thoughtful development strategies and choices and to offer more flexibility. Staff believed the changes could work, but Mr. Diekmann noted some reservations about administration and “gaming of the system” to achieve a required point total. Staff does not wish to adopt a burdensome, complicated system that could have otherwise been spelled out in an ordinance. Staff would need to develop an application process to clearly outline applicant expectations. Further review with the City Council is scheduled for October. Staff may have a draft ordinance prepared for Commission review in November.

Debra Lee wished to encourage and engage broader community awareness in landscape issues beyond the stakeholders involved in this year’s workshops. She was concerned that the City Council hear from a broad range of community members, not just those with vested interests in landscaping. Mr. Diekmann stated an article was published in the *City Side* newsletter in the spring. He characterized the workgroups as a good mix of City staff, landscape installers, civil engineers, landscape architects, commercial property owners, property managers, and others.

COMMISSION COMMENTS: Carlton Basmajian welcomed Anuprit Minhas to the Commission.

STAFF COMMENTS: Mr. Diekmann noted the tentative agenda for the September 21 meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: (Wannemuehler) to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION PASSED: (7-0)

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 PM.

Debra Lee, Chairperson
Planning & Zoning Commission

Joseph C. Newman, Recording Secretary
Department of Planning & Housing