
**SPECIAL
MEETING OF THE PLANNING BOARD
MONDAY, MAY 20, 2019
6:00 PM
255 S. OLD WOODWARD, BIRMINGHAM, MI**

Minutes of the special meeting of the City of Birmingham Planning Board held on May 20, 2019. Chairman Scott Clein convened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Present: Chairman Scott Clein; Board Members Robin Boyle, ~~Stuart Jeffares~~, Daniel Share, Bryan Williams; Alternate Board Member Jason Emerine; Student Representative Sophia Trimble

Absent: Board Member Bert Koseck, Janelle Whipple-Boyce; **Stuart Jeffares**, Alternate Board Member
Naseem Ramin; Student Representative John Utley

Administration: Joe Valentine, City Manager
Jana Ecker, Planning Director
Brooks Cowan, City Planner
Laura Eichenhorn, Transcriptionist

DPZ: Andres Duany
Matt Lambert

McKenna: Sarah Traxler

Gibbs Planning: Robert Gibbs

05-071-19

B. Preview and Discussion of Citywide Master Plan Concepts

Andres Duany introduced the preview of the Citywide Master Plan Concepts. He noted:

- This meeting was convened in order to make sure the Planning Board was well-informed before going into the Master Planning Team's (Team) presentation of recommendations the next day.
- Birmingham has a good balance of age groups and should work to maintain that.
- That while the Team wants to help increase sustainability practices in Birmingham, very few residents seemed concerned with enhancing the City's sustainability practices.
- While planning teams often cannot do much in the way of sustainability, they can minimize the necessity of using a car to get around and maximize other modes of transportation, which will have the effect of reducing emissions.
- New parking garages in the Triangle District should be used to incentivize new development, by offering a certain number of spaces free to the first developers to develop in the area.

- The Team's report may be thin because they are working to be as succinct and clear as possible.
- The City's code needs to be simplified and reorganized. Mr. Duany recommended that the City put out an RFP in the future for up to a 50% reduction in regulations due to redundancies. Mr. Lambert recommended more diagrams and less text in a future rewrite of the code. Both Mr. Duany and Mr. Lambert emphasized the need for plain language with the City codes that the layperson could understand.

The Master Planning Team's preview consisted of the following concepts:

Revising the downtown and neighborhood parking policies

The Team recommends allowing each block to choose one of three parking restriction options in order to simplify Birmingham's parking. The three options would be no restriction, 2 hour parking from 9am to 4pm, except by permit, or parking by permit only, 5pm to 10am.

For residential streets adjacent to Seaholm and the Downtown, a fourth option will be available, to offer parking by permit only, monthly permits available for approximately 60% of total curbside spaces. With this option, the revenue collected would go to the neighborhood.

The Team also recommended allowing downtown residential parking passes for parking structures in the evening, resulting in more limited unit size and price.

Restructuring neighborhood boundaries, their governance, and decision making

While there are 27 existing neighborhood associations, there are 16 areas in Birmingham that would be more appropriate to define as neighborhoods. These 16 areas are roughly consistent and center around the residents.

The City should create a position, under the City Manager, of a neighborhood liaison in order to facilitate and encourage regular communication of the neighborhoods' needs and concerns to City government.

The City should notify neighbors beyond the 300 feet currently practiced in order to increase the diversity of opinions heard on new developments, and to acknowledge that the influence of the people within 300 feet is a vested interested like any other party that would be directly impacted by a development. Invitations should be sent out to the pedestrian shed, which is anyone in a walkable range from the proposed development. This distance is defined as 1,500 feet.

Subsidiarity is to be encouraged within the City. Whatever the smallest unit that can competently make the decision for itself about certain rules and restrictions -- for instance, parking restrictions by block -- should be allowed to do so.

Establishing neighborhood social centers

Neighborhoods should be designed with neighborhood destinations, seams where each neighborhood meets the next, and cores, which are the center of each neighborhood.

While residents adjacent to a proposed neighborhood amenity, like a market or a cafe, are often concerned it will decrease their property values, the property values frequently actually increase because people have been shown to like living closer to amenities. As long as there are buffers between the residential and commercial and the parking is handled well, proximity to amenities is desirable.

The neighborhood center should address ordinary needs like prepared food, coffee, dry cleaning, or other similar businesses. Professionals should not have offices located in these neighborhood centers.

These neighborhood centers will promote social cohesion and increase walking and bicycling.

The Team argued that people should not need a car to live and get around, noting that about half of the people living in the United States are unlicensed for one reason or another. Neighborhood centers will not only offer value to people who can drive but sometimes choose not to, but it will allow unlicensed populations living within the City to live well, which will also serve the goal of promoting aging in place.

Diversifying housing at neighborhood seams to retain population diversity (e.g. age, household types)

The neighborhood cores should be areas where the character of each neighborhood is conserved. The neighborhood seams, where one neighborhood meets the next, should provide opportunities for more diverse types of housing, such as townhouses and apartments, in order to retain diversity in Birmingham's population.

If two lots are combined within the core of a neighborhood, it should be required that an accessory dwelling unit be added. Setbacks will be maintained as-is.

Preserving the lower rail district & enable future rail connectivity

The lower rail district is Birmingham's incubator for more gritty, authentic, and cool spaces, and that area should be subject to decreased zoning -- known as a pink zone, where the burden of red tape is lightened -- in order to encourage development.

Rail is the future of transportation, and the City should buy the one property that might hinder its rail capacity before the property is developed.

Improving the Woodward edge and crossings to knit the community together

The Team said they were going to recommend two new ways to cross Woodward, one at Maple and one at Haynes. They floated both options to MDOT, who seemed amenable.

Mr. Duany assured Mr. Williams the Team would give specific recommendations for how to create neighborhood seams.

Mr. Gibbs noted that the Mills Pharmacy/Holiday Market parking lot has .7 cars per 1,000 sq. ft. The City code requires 5-10 times that amount, but he said he goes there every day and does not see parking issues. Mr. Gibbs emphasized that neighborhood destinations do not need suburban parking standards.

Chairman Clein thanked the Team and invited public comment.

Cindy Rose asked the Team if they would be recommending any height increases in the Downtown.

Mr. Lambert said the City currently has significant housing capacity, and should be focusing on adding density of residences before considering height additions.

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C. Adjournment

No further business being evident, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Jana L. Ecker

Planning Director