



Bastrop Planning & Zoning Commission

- February 17, 2025

Date 2025-02-20

Overview The board meeting covered various topics, including tree protection ordinance changes, parkland dedication amendments, removal of the gridded street network requirement, establishment of minimum lot sizes, residential setback adjustments, and the proposal to remove duplexes from certain zones, with future discussions planned on several urban development issues.

Introduction and Tree Protection Ordinance

The meeting began with a discussion on the Tree Protection Ordinance. The board members debated the proposed changes to the tree protection measures, including:

- Increasing the fee for removing protected trees from \$250 to \$400 per caliper inch
- Reducing the minimum size for protected trees from 13 inches to 10 inches
- Implementing a \$1000 per day fine for violations, with debate on whether this applies per tree or overall
- Considering criminal penalties for severe violations

Commissioner Tufts expressed concern that the proposed penalties may not be sufficient to deter developers from clear-cutting lots. The city manager, Sylvia, explained that the new measures aim to prevent situations like the Pearl River development, where trees were removed without proper permits.

After extensive discussion, the board voted unanimously to recommend the proposed changes to the City Council, including the \$400 per caliper inch fee, \$1000 per day fine, and the possibility of criminal penalties.



Parkland Dedication and Park Enrichment Fund

The board then moved on to discuss the Parkland Dedication and Park Enrichment Fund. Viviana Nicole Andres, representing the City of Bastrop, presented the proposed amendments to Chapter 10 of the Code of Ordinances. She explained that the current civic space requirements in the B3 Code were not specific enough to ensure adequate parkland for the city. The proposed changes include:

- Requiring 1 acre of parkland for every 100 proposed dwelling units in residential subdivisions
- Requiring 1 acre of parkland for every 200 proposed multifamily units in mixed-use or commercial developments
- Establishing a minimum parkland size of 1 contiguous acre
- Limiting the use of floodways or floodplains as parkland
- Creating a park enrichment fee of \$250 per dwelling unit

Several board members and citizens raised questions about the administration of the funds and the impact on affordable housing. Viviana and the city manager, Sylvia, addressed these concerns, explaining that the fees would be used to improve existing parks and create new ones. After thorough discussion, the board voted unanimously to recommend the proposed amendments to the City Council.

Transportation and Gridded Street Network

The board then addressed the topic of Transportation and Gridded Street Network. Assistant City Manager Andres Rosales presented the proposal to remove the gridded street network requirement from the B3 Code. He explained that the current gridded network, adopted in 2019, was causing issues with development flexibility and increasing maintenance costs for the city. The main points of discussion included:

- Removing the 2019 gridded street network overlay and reverting to the 2017 thoroughfare plan
- Allowing more flexibility for developers to design street layouts while still maintaining connectivity
- Reducing the number of public streets to lower maintenance costs for the city
- Addressing concerns about emergency vehicle access and traffic flow

Several board members and citizens expressed concerns about walkability and the



impact on the city's character. Rosales and City Manager Sylvia addressed these concerns, explaining that the change would not eliminate connectivity but would allow for more practical and cost-effective development. After extensive discussion, the board voted unanimously to recommend the removal of the gridded street network requirement and associated references from the B3 Code. This decision was made in three separate votes for items 7A, 7B, and 7C, all passing unanimously.

Minimum Lot Size

The board then discussed the proposed amendments to establish minimum lot sizes in P2 and P3 residential areas. City Manager Sylvia presented the rationale for introducing minimum lot sizes, explaining that the current lack of restrictions could lead to overly dense development and strain on infrastructure. The key points of the proposal included:

- Setting a minimum lot size of 1 acre for P2 zones
- Setting a minimum lot size of 1/3 acre (14,520 sq ft) for P3 zones
- Addressing concerns about infill development and maintaining neighborhood character
- Discussing the impact on affordability and development flexibility

The proposal sparked a heated debate among board members and citizens. Tom Lebowitz, a resident, argued that using averages for minimum lot sizes could be problematic and might negatively impact affordability. Commissioner Parsons suggested considering a more flexible approach based on dwelling units per acre. After extensive discussion, the board voted 5-1 to recommend the proposed minimum lot sizes to the City Council, with Commissioner Estes voting against. The decision aimed to balance development needs with preserving neighborhood character and managing infrastructure demands.

Setbacks for Residential Areas

The board then addressed the issue of setbacks for residential areas in P2 and P3 zones. City Manager Sylvia presented the proposal to amend the B3 Code to establish standards for first layer setbacks that match the built environment. The main points of discussion included:

- Requiring new developments to match setbacks of neighboring properties
- Addressing issues with recent developments that don't align with existing



neighborhood character

- Proposing a range of setbacks based on adjacent properties, plus or minus 5 feet
- Discussing the impact on walkability and street aesthetics

Sylvia presented examples of recent developments that didn't match the existing setbacks, causing visual inconsistencies in neighborhoods. Pablo Serna, a local architect, supported the proposal but suggested considering a wider range of setbacks to accommodate different neighborhood characteristics. After discussion, the board voted unanimously to recommend the proposed setback amendments to the City Council. This decision aimed to preserve neighborhood character while allowing for some flexibility in development.

Removing Duplexes from P2 and P3 Zones

The board then discussed the proposal to remove duplexes as an allowable building type from P2 and P3 zones. City Manager Sylvia presented the rationale for this change, citing concerns about maintaining the single-family character of these zones and preventing unintended density increases. The key points of discussion included:

- The impact of recent developments, such as the demolition at 1005 Pecan Street, on neighborhood character
- Concerns about developers exploiting current regulations to build high-density housing in single-family areas
- The potential effect on affordable housing options
- Debate over property rights and development flexibility

The proposal sparked significant debate among board members and citizens. Darren Little, a resident, argued against the removal of duplexes, citing concerns about affordability and housing diversity. Tom Lebowitz also opposed the change, suggesting it was an overreaction to a single incident. After extensive discussion, the board decided to send the proposal back to staff for further review. They requested that staff return with recommendations on how to effectively limit duplexes based on lot size, parking requirements, and setbacks, rather than implementing a blanket ban. The motion passed with 4 votes in favor and 2 against.



Future Updates and Topics for Discussion

As the meeting drew to a close, City Manager Sylvia presented an overview of future updates and topics for discussion. These included:

- Further refinement of lot size minimums and setbacks
- Addressing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and their regulations
- Reviewing uses in residential districts
- Clarifying the public-private realm responsibilities
- Updating definitions in the code
- Discussing water reuse credits for properties capturing and reusing water
- Considering a historic district overlay and its potential alignment with certified local government status
- Creating a black cultural district overlay for the Walnut and Pine area
- Addressing parking issues in commercial areas
- Reviewing lighting regulations to reduce light pollution

No formal decisions were made regarding these future topics, but the board acknowledged the importance of addressing these issues in upcoming meetings. The meeting was then adjourned.