



CITY OF BUCHANAN PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2026 – 6:00 PM
CHAMBER OF BUCHANAN CITY HALL - 302 N REDBUD TRAIL, BUCHANAN MI

MINUTES

- I. *The City of Buchanan Planning Commission, in compliance with Michigan's Open Meetings Act, hereby gives notice of a Planning Commission meeting to be held in the Chamber of City Hall.*
- II. ** Comments may also be submitted in writing at least 4 hours in advance to the Zoning & Community Development Director Kristen Gundersen at kgundersen@cityofbuchanan.com*
- * Buchanan City will provide necessary and reasonable auxiliary aide and services to those individuals with disabilities who wish to attend the public meeting upon receiving at least one (1) week's prior notice. Any such individual requiring such aids or services should contact the city in writing or by telephoning: Buchanan City Clerk; 302 North Redbud Trail, Buchanan, MI 49107, 269-695-3844.*
- III. Regular Meeting - Call to Order**
- Meeting called to order at 6:01pm.
- IV. Pledge of Allegiance**
- Houser led in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- V. Roll Call**
- Present: Vigansky, Houser, Brown, Pleasant, Lysy, Garry
- Absent: Wregglesworth
- City Staff Present: City Clerk Kalla Langston-Weiss, Planning & Community Development Director Kristen Gundersen
- VI. Approve Agenda**
- Pleasant moved, seconded by Brown to approve Agenda as presented. Voice vote carried unanimously.
- VII. Public Comments - Agenda Items**
- Dennis Mori – Mori apologized for his behavior at the previous meeting and thanked the Board for approving the sign text changes.
- VIII. Approve Minutes**
- A. Consider the Public Hearing & Regular Meeting Minutes from July 14th, 2026.
- Brown identified a typo and Garry had a question about the public comment section.
- Brown moved, seconded by Lysy to approve the July 14th, 2026 Minutes as amended. Voice vote carried unanimously.
- IX. Old Business**
- A. Review and Discuss Master Plan Draft Objectives, Goals and Actions
- Staff reviewed the proposed goals, objectives, and action items for the Master Plan. The previous Master Plan contained numerous individual goal areas, and the current draft consolidates those items into five broader categories.
- Strong Neighborhoods**
- The Commission reviewed goals relating to housing diversity, housing improvements, housing incentives, and vacant and underutilized buildings.

The Commission requested that language regarding aging in place be included within the housing objectives.

Vibrant Community

The Commission reviewed goals relating to natural resources, trail connections, walkability, architecture, community heritage, historic character, gateways, parks, and streets.

The Commission discussed historic preservation and agreed that language encouraging applications for National Register Historic Preservation designation would be more appropriate than creating a separate Historic Preservation Commission.

Infrastructure / Public Assets

The Commission discussed broadband and public Wi-Fi opportunities. Staff will add an action item to investigate broadband/public Wi-Fi opportunities, particularly within the downtown area.

The Commission also discussed:

- Sidewalk, trail, and corridor extensions and improvements;
- Public transportation and continued coordination with DART and regional/countywide transportation efforts;
- Long-term opportunities for an Amtrak stop in the Buchanan area; and
- Identifying consistent funding sources for tree maintenance, watering, and planting.

Effective Government

The Commission reviewed goals related to zoning and development regulations, land use, code enforcement, communication, technology, and governmental services.

Staff provided an update regarding upcoming technology improvements, including the City's website, agenda management software, financial software, and future building permit software.

The Commission discussed methods of improving public communication, including text and email notification systems.

The Commission also discussed continued cooperation and possible shared services with neighboring governmental units, including public safety/fire services. Staff will develop additional language addressing intergovernmental cooperation and public safety.

Economic Vitality

The Commission discussed economic development and marketing goals.

Members discussed increasing the City's social media presence and coordinating marketing efforts with organizations such as the DDA, Buchanan Area Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber, and regional tourism organizations.

Staff will develop additional language regarding marketing opportunities, including heritage tourism and other methods of promoting Buchanan.

The Commission agreed to continue refining the Master Plan goals at a future meeting.

B. Review and Discuss Unified Development Code - Signs draft language

There will be a public hearing next month. Staff recommends a minimum clearance for signs over sidewalks of 6'8" and does not recommend allowing open flags be allowed below that. There was discussion on different Open flags in different communities and what clearance is best. Gundersen refined the code to allow for either a sandwich board or an open flag in the public right of way.

Pleasant moved, seconded by Brown for Table 71-T District Regulations to be updated with a minimum clearance for wall mounted signs be decreased from 8' to 6'8" when located over public or private

sidewalk and continued use of 15' when located over public or private streets/alleys or drive-aisles.

Yes: Brown, Pleasant, Lysy, Garry, Vigansky

No: Houser

Houser thought this motion was to lower the minimum clearance below 6'8".

Vigansky moved, seconded by Lysy to void the previous motion. Voice vote carried unanimously.

Pleasant moved, seconded by Brown to decrease the minimum clearance of a projecting sign from 8' to 6'8" when located above a sidewalk. Voice vote carried unanimously.

Brown moved, seconded by Pleasant to recommend that where in the draft sign ordinance regulations it references 1 and 2 family be changed to 1 and 4 family to comply with regulations established in table 71-T. Voice vote carried unanimously.

Houser moved, seconded by Vigansky to support the draft language found on page 22 of the August 11, 2026 Planning Commission packet which allows temporary signage in the D (Downtown) District either as sandwich boards or open flag sign as presented.

Lysy noted that the open flag sign could be lower and meet ADA standards if there was a barrier beneath it. Brown asked Mori if the open flags were meant more for pedestrians or drivers, Mori answered they were meant for walkers and reiterated that signs with a lower clearance could be ADA compliant if a barrier was below them. A lower clearance allows for a more visible sign and is easier for business owners to put up and take down. Houser thinks lower signs are a visibility issue.

Yes: Vigansky, Houser, Brown, Pleasant, Garry

No: Lysy

Motion carried.

C. Review Recommendations from Design Review Committee Associated with Unified Development Code

Staff reviewed proposed amendments establishing a formal Downtown Design Review Overlay District and standards for the Downtown Design Review Committee.

The proposed amendments would:

- Establish the Downtown Design Review Overlay District;
- Define the purpose and responsibilities of the Downtown Design Review Committee;
- Establish standards for architectural review;
- Allow certain applications to be reviewed administratively by staff;
- Establish the Downtown Design Review Committee as a decision-making body;
- Establish the Planning Commission as the appeal body for denied applications; and
- Add applicable definitions to the Unified Development Code.

The Commission discussed architectural standards, including building character, materials, windows, doors, paint, masonry, mechanical equipment, and the importance of documenting the reasons supporting Design Review Committee decisions.

The Commission also discussed whether adjacent property owners should receive mailed notice of Design Review applications. Staff noted that adding such notice would require changes to the existing application deadlines.

Staff was directed to:

- Change references from "Design Review Committee" to "Downtown Design Review Committee" where appropriate;

- Reconcile references in the applicable tables;
- Modify the proposed overlay district description/map to include additional identified green space/parcels facing Redbud Trail; and
- Prepare the amendments for public hearing.

D. Review Final Draft Fencing, Screening, Lighting and Landscaping Amendments to Unified Development Code

Staff reviewed proposed amendments relating to fencing and landscaping. The Commission agreed that chain-link fencing could be referenced generally rather than limiting the provision to vinyl-coated chain link. Chain-link fencing would remain limited to appropriate side and rear yard locations.

Staff also reviewed a list of permitted tree species developed with assistance from Tree Friends. If the proposed species is not included on the list, staff may review the request and consult with the Tree Board as necessary.

X. New Business

XI. Public Comment - Non-Agenda Items Only

XII. Zoning & Community Development Director Comments

Gundersen is finishing up this round of changes to the Unified Development Code and expects September and October to be quieter due to staff being away at conferences and City Hall updates to computer software.

XIII. Commissioner Comments

Vigansky – None.

Pleasant – Grateful the Board is making progress.

Brown – The discussion they are having is important. It is important to have a dialogue with the community.

Lysy – None.

Garry – Appreciates having a deep discussion. Thanked Langston-Weiss and Gundersen for their hard work.

Houser – Resigned from the Planning Commission Board.

XIV. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Kalla Langston-Weiss, City Clerk