



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

4:00 PM January 19, 2022
Virtual – Microsoft Teams Meeting

1. ROLL CALL

City Council: Gary Bode, Kyle Strengholt, Brent Lenssen

Staff: Heidi Gudde, Dave Timmer, John Williams

Guests: multiple attendees (approximately 20-25) but no formal record of names was collected at this virtual meeting

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Community Development Committee Meeting Minutes of 12/15/21 approved as presented.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. Presentation: Concepts for Mixed-Use Zoning Code Amendment

Heidi Gudde, Planning Director, presented a concept for the implementation of a mixed-use zoning overlay. This overlay would be specifically assigned to properties at strategic locations within the City. It would replace the mixed-use provisions of the City's code that are currently used within the CSL zone. Eligible properties would be commercially zoned properties that are along significant transportation routes and are currently within walking distance (1/4 mile) of an existing commercial center. The proposal would reduce or even eliminate the requirement for new development within these overlay areas to create commercial spaces. This is due to the lack of demand for commercial spaces. The overlay would require that new development create outdoor plaza space that serves as an amenity to residential development. A portion of these spaces could be converted, at a later date, to commercial uses if the demand exists. The uses that could be established there would be geared toward neighborhood (rather than regional) uses.

Properties that currently have CSL zoning but are not located within these new mixed-use centers should be considered for rezone to residential use if they meet the criteria for a land use shift and rezone.

Gudde also raised questions related to the City's housing goals. Specifically, the goal to provide a split of 60% single family to 40% multi-

family housing types. This goal and associated polices are laid out in Section H of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Recent development has included more multi-family residential units than single-family units. This is a change from the development pattern of 10 years ago. During the moratorium, City staff will pull together the current status of this housing goal. The group was also asked to consider if the goal remains relevant and, if it should be altered, what changes should be made.

b. Parking Code Update – LMC 19.51 Amendment

Gudde included, in her presentation, a summary of staff suggested changes to the parking code. In general the changes would create a more project-specific approach to required parking counts. Suggested changes also eliminated the parking reduction for senior housing projects and proposed that parking stall size be slightly reduced for a more efficient use of space.

c. Stakeholder Feedback: Moratorium and Mixed-Use

The presentation regarding mixed use development was followed by a time of stakeholder feedback. Topics raised, questions asked, and comments made included the following points:

- In the proposed open space requirements, how would critical areas be counted?
- Considerations to the scale of buildings is important when permitting multi-story buildings. Suggested that a stepped-up approach be used to keep buildings along street frontages to lower heights. Urged the City to lift the moratorium as soon as possible.
- Support was expressed for walkability of projects – especially for kids and seniors.
- The lack of affordable housing options was raised.
- Parking requirements should be reduced rather than increased.
- Support for the addition of rental units within the City of Lynden as it's very difficult to find a rental right now and costs are very high.
- Support for additional units to be constructed as better availability leads to more competitive pricing of units / rents.
- Support for additional housing units along bus routes.
- Support for parking in the downtown area and for more activity to occur downtown – evening activity.

- Support for the overlay concept presented but expressed concern related to the required open space as these amenities raise the cost of a project and hurt affordability. Suggested that open spaces could be shared between projects or 'banked' so that there is an efficiency of design.
- Building height should be sensitive to the surrounding property uses.
- A design committee should review site layout and details.
- Concern expressed about the unaffordability of homes in Lynden.
- Concern expressed about the State's consideration to eliminate single-family zoning.
- Statement that retail uses can only survive with residents (the density) to support them. Not viable with the supporting population.
- Tax breaks suggested for commercial uses within mixed-use developments.
- Support of buildings heights of up to 58 – 60 feet so that a four-story building could be constructed. Four stories do not fit well within a 48-foot height limit.
- Support expressed for the market to determine what is needed – namely residential development at this time. Support for live-work units as many people are working or even providing services from their homes.
- Statement that commercial spaces are very difficult to fill. Bender Plaza has seen multiple restaurants fail. The expectations that medical offices would locate in mixed-use plazas is unrealistic. The mixed-use concept is nice but the City does not need additional commercial spaces.
- Support for mixed use concepts but noted that there are various empty commercial spaces throughout the City.
- Note that finding and securing employees is also a current challenge within the business sector.

Meeting concluded with a brief discussion of next steps. Staff will be seeking Council input regarding the concept presented with the anticipation of moving forward with code revisions in the coming months. An email address list of stakeholders is growing and interested folks can be added so that they get

updates on this issue. Staff will also be sending out a brief survey to attendees as a means of collecting additional feedback.

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:30pm.

Next Meeting Date: February 23, 2022