

MINUTES
AUSTIN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2007
5:30 P.M.
AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tony Bennett, Lynn Spainhower, Suzanne McCarthy, Glen Mair, Jim Mino and Rich Bergstrom

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elizabeth Bankes, Shawn Martin and Kathy Stutzman

OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Hoium, Craig Byram, Council Member Dick Pacholl, public and media

The meeting was called to order by Commission Member Mair at 5:30 P.M.

Commission Member Mino made a motion to approve the November 13, 2007 Planning Commission Minutes as written, seconded by Commission Member Spainhower. Motion passed unanimously.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING: To conduct a public hearing relating to the proposed changes to the Austin Comprehensive Plan Future Land-Use Map involving the westerly portion of the Northwest Retail Arterial Commercial District. This action is pursuant to Minnesota State Statutes 462.352 and 462.355.

Craig Hoium briefly reviewed the location of the properties where changes are proposed in the NW Retail Area west of highway 218 and north of Interstate 90. There are state statutes included in the back up material that refers to the action that could be taken this evening. Most of the property being reviewed is of agricultural nature, some of which is zoned as R-1 or R-2 districts because of recent annexation and no development has taken place. A portion of the Hopkins property is currently located in Lansing Township but both the City of Austin and the Township board have approved the annexation of that property which will be going up to the State Administrative offices this week for approval. Mr. Hoium introduced Joel West from Yaggy Colby and Associates to give a power point presentation.

Mr. West, planner from Yaggy Colby & Assoc. said the goal in the NW Retail Area was to prepare a future street layout and land use plan, to determine land use compatibility with existing and proposed uses, to prepare a transportation plan and to analyze and revise the land use plan based on the transportation plan. Mr. West showed slides of the existing land use plan, transportation plan and zoning map. He then showed slides of Transportation Option 1 and Option 2 pointing out the differences between them. Option 1 design has S curves in CSAH 27 which make for poor land use and an existing home that would be affected. In the

design for Option 2 there are better intersections at right angles that would provide better land use and totally eliminates the S curves and avoids the existing home.

Commission Member Mino asked how the boundary parallel to the roadway is determined.

Mr. West said the goal was to have enough distance, 200-300 feet to provide a tree buffer where town homes or something similar could be constructed since there is a residential area to the west located within the Seven Springs Addition.

Commission Member Mino asked the same question of 16th Ave NW which would be parallel to I-90.

Mr. West said in talking with the City of Austin and Austin Utilities there are a number of utilities that run through that area. We took advantage of the existing roadways and frontage area along I-90.

Commission Member Mino asked if there would be enough area for a strip mall on 16th Ave NW.

Mr. West said yes or a development could choose to go north and be one sided providing better visibility to I-90.

Mr. Hoium said if or when land is developed it does not mean the roads have to be developed exactly as they are on this plan. If and when the land should be developed there are wetlands in the area, depending on where they are located and how a business chooses to develop the area could affect the location of the roadways. The definite location of the roadways would be decided when the property is platted in more detailed planning is conducted for this area. The time frame of when the area is developed would hinge upon when the roadway extensions are necessary. MnDot has scheduled controlled lighting at the intersection of highway 218 and I-90 similar to the lights at the 4th St NW and I-90 intersection. He also pointed out the road that would extend and connect to 21st Ave NW where Collision Specialists is on the corner of 21st Ave and Highway 218.

Commission Member Mino asked if there has been any discussion on a controlled intersection at 21st Ave NW and Highway 218.

Mr. Hoium said there have been discussions with MnDot on the intersection of 218 and 21st Ave NW and much of the information provided by Yaggy Colby and Assoc has been forwarded to MnDot.

Mr. West showed a slide on the existing and future land use maps and pointed out the differences and changes. He also said as development occurs further traffic studies would be required. Yaggy Colby & Assoc. gave a rough estimate of \$4.1 million dollars for all roadway improvements in the NW Retail Area. He also recommended official mapping of corridors and future roadways, as it would assist you as developers come in.

Commission Member Mino asked what official mapping is.

Mr. West said official mapping is a document that would be adopted showing where the City wants future roadways to go and then filed with the County and the City so developers would know not to put structures in proposed roadways. You cannot stop people from putting up

structures in the proposed roadways but if they did and the roadway was then developed only the land has to be paid for not the structure because the official mapping is a notice of the roadway location.

Commission Member Mino asked if official mapping is a preliminary step to platting.

Mr. West said yes it is a way to plan outside your jurisdiction. You would probably have to work with the county also.

Mr. Hoium said in the mid 90's a transportation plan was adopted and when the Wal Mart development came to town the roadways were clearly defined and the responsibility of the developer. Official mapping is a tool that is used for leverage when development occurs. Mr. Hoium also wanted to point out that sometime in this process something needs to be defined for pedestrian traffic.

Mr. West said that is being worked on in the Park and Trail development area. It could be an addendum to this report or tied into the Park and Trail report.

Mr. Hoium said there is a legislative trail called the Blazing Star Trail that would connect to the Albert Lea area and we do have state bonding money for a portion of that project. The idea is the trail could pass through this NW portion of the community along the south side of Oak Park Mall through the oak grove trees & passed the adjacent hotels. The City of Austin has also been working on a trail that would interconnect to Todd Park and the Shooting Star Trail. That trail would extend through the wooded area north of the Hormel corporate offices. The City of Austin has already surveyed the area and has acquired the funds. The City Engineers also put together a plan for a tunnel for pedestrian traffic to get across highway 218 between Oak Park Mall and Target. All of these could potentially be incorporated with the planned pedestrian way.

Commission Member Spainhower stated that Option 1 for transportation doesn't really seem to be an option. Option 2 offers the best potential for growth and tying into existing roadways.

Mr. Hoium said also to include the land use portion and identify the pedestrian traffic issue.

Commission Member Mino asked if the official mapping should be included in a motion.

Mr. Hoium said that could be incorporated into one motion.

Commission Member Mino made a motion to recommend the Option 2 Transportation plan, Future Land Use map, future provisions for pedestrian traffic and parks and that official mapping be recommended also, seconded by Commission Member Bergstrom. Motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS: Review of Austin Success Center Development

Mr. Hoium said in the backup material there is a packet of information on the Austin Success Center. There is an early childhood initiative committee which Lynn is involved in. They made an official request to the State of Minnesota for bonding dollars to assist in the funding of this project. There is a copy of that request in the packet. Some of the organizations that would be included in the Center are a community childcare center, parenting resource center, SE Minnesota Community Action Council, Headstart, Austin Park and Recreation offices and

potentially others. This would be a one stop shop to provide assistance for parents and family needs. There is a budget listed but until the session ends in May of 2008 will not know for sure what will happen with this project. The application did get a response from both the Senate and House Capital Investment Committees. Both of those committees reviewed the project with us this fall which is very positive in their consideration for this. The committee is meeting to discuss other options if the bonding money is not approved. This is only an informational packet, no action is required. Since the location of the Justice Center will be downtown one of the location options is the land east of the old Austin Downtown Motel that could be redeveloped. This is not a definite location but a possibility.

Commission Member McCarthy said the CLC Center is at Queen of Angels and Catherwood and Apple Lane wouldn't this be in competition with them? Is Austin getting into the childcare business?

Mr. Hoium said the facility would be owned by the City of Austin but the spaces would be leased to the organizations.

Commission Member Spainhower said the waiting list at Catherwood and Apple Lane are very long and we are especially looking at birth to 5yrs. Also when parents are new to the community all the resources would be under one roof. We are trying to alleviate the waiting lists and also to put a lot of different agencies together in one area.

Commission Member McCarthy asked if there would be child care on site.

Commission Member Spainhower said yes, depending on the needs of the family they can be directed to whichever childcare facility would work for them. If they work second shift they are directed to Catherwood. We would work together which is the concept.

Commission Member McCarthy asked where Health and Human Services would be.

Commission Member Spainhower said Health and Human Services is still unresolved.

Mr. Hoium said it is not in tonight's material but there was a conceptual site plan done where Health and Human Services would be collocated on the same site.

Commission Member Mair asked about the timetable for the project.

Commission Member Spainhower said it depends on if the bonding money is approved.

City Council Member Dick Pacholl wanted to inform the Planning Commission that the City of Austin has not appropriated any money for this project unless the State comes across with their portion and that is still not a guarantee that the City would still come across with the money. Right now there are a lot of issues on the books for tax dollars, the biggest item being the Justice Center. Then there is the Family Visitation Center and the Austin Success Center. Where is all of this money coming from? These are good ideas but where is our priority? I do not support the City of Austin owning a building to fund private agencies.

Commission Member Spainhower stated that the priorities are the children from ages 0-5 years old. Do you want to fund children the ages of 0 to 5 and get them ready for school or do you

want to build more prisons and jails. I feel that three million dollars for a Success Center is a better use of money. It really depends on if you see the glass as half full or half empty.

Mr. Pacholl stated he read figures somewhere that it costs a day care center \$10,000 per person a year to operate.

Commission Member Spainhower said Mr. Pacholl needs to revisit his statistics and get some reliable numbers from people in the day care business. This subject is getting off point.

Mr. Pacholl said when this project comes back to the Planning Commission let it be known that he does not approve of the City of Austin taking over something that is involved in the private sector.

Mr. Hoium stated that the first Planning Commission meeting of each year there is usually an orientation meeting for the Planning Commission which takes place after the meeting. He also wanted to bring it to everyone's attention that this is Rich Bergstrom's last Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Hoium expressed his appreciation to Rich for the time he has served on the Planning Commission. Along with the meeting in January we would like to have a dinner in appreciation of Rich and to introduce his replacement who will be Lonnie Skalicky.

Commission Member Spainhower asked for an update on the Wal Mart project.

Mr. Hoium said there is one layer of asphalt done for off-street parking. All of the foundations for the lighting and underground cable are in place. He does not know the schedule for putting the lighting up, but guessed it would be next spring. The building itself is weathered in. They work is now focused on the interior of the building. Mr. Hoium encouraged everyone to drive by the site, the layout has come together real well. The hardware store will be moved or demolished at some time. Wal Mart is currently looking at providing three outlots along 18th Ave NW.

Commission Member Spainhower asked about the proposed gas station that was to go in the hardware store location.

Mr. Hoium said that is not going to happen. Completion of the Wal Mart is set for late spring early summer of 2008.

Commission Member Spainhower made a motion to adjourn the Planning Commission Meeting at 6:30 P.M., seconded by Commission Member Bergstrom. Motion passed unanimously.