

**GRAND JUNCTION PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 22, 2013 MINUTES
6:00 p.m. to 7:18 p.m.**

The regularly scheduled Planning Commission hearing was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Wall. The public hearing was held in the City Hall Auditorium.

In attendance, representing the City Planning Commission, were Reginald Wall (Chairman), Ebe Eslami (Vice Chairman), Gregory Williams, Keith Leonard, Jon Buschhorn, Christian Reece and Steve Tolle (1st Alternate). Commissioner Loren Couch was absent.

In attendance, representing the City's Public Works and Planning Department – Lisa Cox (Planning Manager), Scott Peterson (Senior Planner) and Dave Thornton (Principal Planner).

Also present was Jamie Beard (Assistant City Attorney).

Lynn Singer was present to record the minutes.

There were 17 interested citizens present during the course of the hearing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRESENTATIONS AND/OR VISITORS

Lisa Cox, Planning Manager, requested to amend the staff report for Agenda Item No. 2, the Feuerborn Annexation, to state that criterion number 1 of section 21.02.140(a) was not applicable and, therefore, had not been met as stated in the staff report. Staff would like to amend the report to reflect that criteria 2 through 5 had been met under the Findings and Conclusions.

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes of Previous Meetings

Approve the minutes of the November 13 and December 11, 2012 regular meetings.

2. Feuerborn Annexation – Zone of Annexation

Request a recommendation of approval to City Council to zone 2.68 +/- acres from County RSF-R (Residential Single Family – Rural) to a City C-1 (Light Commercial) zone district.

FILE #: ANX-2012-518
APPLICANT: Don Lilyquist – Maverik Inc
LOCATION: 2902 & 2906 D Road
STAFF: Scott Peterson

3. Colorado Mesa University Rezone – Planned Development – Extension Request

***** Continued from the January 8, 2013 regular meeting *****

Request a recommendation of approval to City Council for an extension of five (5) additional years until December 2017 for the previously approved Outline Development Plan to allow a mixture of residential, commercial and light industrial uses on 154.08 +/- acres in a PD (Planned Development) zone district.

FILE #: ODP-2008-154
APPLICANT: Colorado Mesa University Real Estate Foundation
LOCATION: 2899 D-1/2 Road
STAFF: Scott Peterson

Chairman Wall briefly explained the Consent Agenda and invited the public, planning commissioners, and staff to speak if they wanted any item pulled for additional discussion. After discussion, there were no objections or revisions received from the audience or Planning Commissioners on the Consent Agenda items.

MOTION: (Commissioner Reece) “Mr. Chairman, I move that we approve the Consent Agenda with that one correction.”

Commissioner Eslami seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 7 - 0.

Public Hearing Items

4. Rock Shop Enclave Annexation – Zone of Annexation – PULLED 1/11/2013

Request a recommendation of approval to City Council to zone 49.82 acres from County RSF-R (Residential Single Family Rural) and County I-2 (General Industrial) to a City I-1 (Light Industrial) zone district.

FILE #: ANX-2012-574
APPLICANT: City of Grand Junction
LOCATION: South of D Road, East of South 15th Street and South of the Riverside Parkway on both sides of 27-1/2 Road north of Las Colonias Park
STAFF: Brian Rusche

5. North Avenue Overlay Zone District – Zoning Code Amendment

Request a recommendation of approval to City Council of a text amendment to the Zoning and Development Code (Title 21, Grand Junction Municipal Code) to add the North Avenue Overlay Zone District.

FILE #: ZCA-2012-572
APPLICANT: City of Grand Junction
LOCATION: North Avenue between 1st Street to east I-70 Business Loop
STAFF: Dave Thornton

Staff’s Presentation

Dave Thornton, Principal Planner, Public Works, Utilities and Planning Department, said that they had been working on the North Avenue Overlay for close to a year. He said that the overlay would cover the area from 1st Street to I-70 Business Loop on the east and all properties that touched North Avenue would be within the overlay district boundary. The City has adopted two different corridor plans that encompassed that area. In 2007 the first plan was adopted by City Council which comprised the area from 12th Street east to I-70 Business Loop and in 2011 the North Avenue West Corridor Plan was adopted which planned the rest of the corridor from 12th Street west to the Business Loop.

A survey had been conducted of the community regarding commercial vacancy rates and provided a snapshot and comparison of the amount of office and retail space available within the City limits. He stated that there was currently an 11.7% vacancy rate on North Avenue versus 5.9% City-wide and stated that it was the City's desire to revitalize North Avenue and believed the overlay district helped that revitalization effort and would be beneficial for the community. An advisory committee was formed and appointed by City Council in February 2012 and was made up of various property and business owners along the corridor. The Committee met nearly monthly, took a walking/bus tour of the corridor and held an open house in September to seek feedback from other business and property owners on the corridor regarding the draft zoning overlay concepts.

Elements of the proposed overlay district include a pedestrian scale streetscape; promoting site design with more building and less landscaping; accommodating all modes of transportation and users within the right-of-way; providing incentives to encourage new development and redevelopment; removing barriers to development; and creating safer access to North Avenue businesses.

The overlay district consists of three areas of emphasis. 1. Mandatory standards that include right-of-way dedication, construction for streetscape improvements including 8 ft detached sidewalk and 8 ft wide "park strip" improvements that are required for all new development and redevelopment regardless of the underlying "base" zone. 2. "Opt in" standards that are optional, but incentivized to encourage the developer to develop under these standards by choice. The overlay standards for landscaping (50% less) and setback (zero setbacks) are reduced as incentives to opt in. A maximum setback of 10 ft. (with exceptions for pedestrian spaces like outdoor dining areas, etc.) is proposed to create the building form and vision the North Avenue Corridor Plans established. This vision includes construction of buildings that are built closer to the street, requiring a front door to face North Avenue, in addition to pedestrian amenities enhancing the visual and human scale of the corridor. 3. A "Site Upgrade Point System" is included within the North Avenue Overlay Zone district to create a vehicle that can be the structure to implement an incentive grant program in the future as money becomes available from any source.

Mr. Thornton noted that there were areas where an existing building was within the required right-of-way, closer than 16 feet from the curb and the Committee was not

suggesting that those portions of the buildings within that area be demolished in order to meet the standards. He mentioned that a higher priority was to keep the sidewalk as wide as possible and lessen the amount of distance between the sidewalk and the curb. He said the multi-purpose easement required in all areas of Grand Junction wasn't needed along North Avenue as utilities were either in an alley or already installed in the roadway. He added that ultimately North Avenue would have 11' travel lanes with an optional bike path, but the bike path wouldn't occur until it was deemed that traffic conditions along the corridor would be safe enough to accommodate them, occurring at a future time when access and other safety improvements have been completed. The streetscape improvements placed in the area between the curb and the sidewalk could include things such as bike racks, shelters for the buses and trash cans. Long-term the entire corridor would see detached sidewalks and pedestrian lighting. By example, the sidewalk in front of Colorado Mesa University fell within inches of the proposed standard for sidewalk and park strip widths and is an example of what one could see throughout the corridor when developed to the standards.

Mr. Thornton identified another area of interest where the overlay standards try to emphasize a more urban streetscape and meet the goals and visions of the corridor plans to bring new development up closer to the street. Because some areas of the corridor were built in a suburban fashion, there is an opportunity to increase intensity and density of development by using the overlay standards. He clarified the opt-in standards were set up that if a developer wanted to opt-in, they would have to abide by the vision of the corridor plans – to bring the buildings closer to the street – the setbacks had been reduced and because the buildings would be closer to the street, there would not be a need for a landscaping strip required under the traditional suburban development of a commercial zone district. The design of the overlay was to reduce landscaping, screening and buffering so the overlay would allow for the ability to create a decorative wall instead of a landscaping strip similar to what was allowed in downtown Grand Junction for parking lots abutting North Avenue. This would allow a property owner to better utilize more of their property. He said that under the vision of the corridor, parking would be either to the rear or the side of the building.

Mr. Thornton next gave a comparison of setbacks and gave various examples in various zone districts. The corridor plan encourages a pedestrian emphasis especially areas around CMU and the high school that had a tremendous amount of pedestrian traffic. He identified other standards of the overlay which included the location of drive-thru lanes, no parking lots in front of buildings, awning/portico-type treatments on buildings and improving access.

Next, in order to emphasize the corridor streetscape feel that tries to create interest in the buildings, the overlay provides guidelines to try to create visual interest along the corridor that would enhance the building's architecture. If a building was built within the maximum setback up to the property line, a front door facing North Avenue would also be required creating a visual impression that welcomes passing traffic and identifies the business with the building. If one opted-in, setbacks and landscaping would be reduced. Mr. Thornton provided some examples of existing Grand Junction businesses

on minor arterial streets (24 ½ Road and Horizon Drive) where the front door to the street was part of their image and which he felt was advantageous. He also discussed minimization of access points that were not needed, creating safer access. He reminded the Commission that landscaping would be reduced by approximately fifty percent under the opt-in standards.

Another area of emphasis was the sign upgrade point system and Mr. Thornton clarified that this was just setting the stage for a future funding source to create a hierarchy of priorities and a point system whereas if money was available, the point system would determine how much of a project would be funded.

It is hoped that people would take advantage of the opt-in standards where they could save money on landscaping and use more of their site. In cases where new development or redevelopment of a site was not proposed the North Avenue Advisory Committee wanted to try to encourage North Avenue property owners to take steps to bring their existing structures and sites more into the vision of the corridor. The committee wanted a system that would provide incentives and they talked about various ways of accomplishing that vision. The "Site Upgrade Point System" Improvement Table is a priority list that provides a point system based on today's costs and was established so that when the incentive program was funded, the amount of a grant would be based on the points accrued. The committee continues to work on how to administer the point system, but that is not a part of this proposed Overlay Zone.

Staff found that the proposed Zoning Code amendment to include the North Avenue Overlay Zone, met the vision, goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and is consistent with the applicable approval criteria.

Questions

Commissioner Williams raised a question regarding mandatory standards and whether fences and walls would be included if a building was in the right-of-way. Mr. Thornton said that it was strictly buildings, most of them existing along the west end of the corridor, where it would be necessary to adjust the improvements along the front of the building. Although any fence or wall as part of the reconstruction would be expected to be removed and brought into conformance.

Commissioner Eslami asked if there was any plan (design) in place for this project. Mr. Thornton said there wasn't a design for the corridor at this time, but one was anticipated this year as part of a federal grant the City was awarded by the Federal Highways Administration which would design three miles, on both sides, from 1st Street to 29 Road.

Commissioner Reece asked if the remaining areas outside of the three miles identified would have the same consistency in design. Mr. Thornton said that they hoped it would but it was too soon to determine whether they would have the funds to follow through to the I-70 Business Loop with this design project.

Chairman Wall asked as far as remodeling, in order to trigger the mandatory standards would that only be an external remodel. Mr. Thornton confirmed that it would be for new development or redevelopment that already requires such mandatory requirements of right-of-way dedication and landscaping the right-of-way areas which is required in all nonresidential zoning districts in the City as per city policies and would not include minor interior remodels.

Chairman Wall raised a question where businesses may share an entrance or an exit and the front door was on North Avenue. He gave the example if one had to walk from the back parking lot to the front so that one had to walk through the entrance or exit way. He asked if there was a standard for a sidewalk or something else so that people did not have to walk through the entrance and/or exit. Mr. Thornton said that the opt-in standards really deal with frontage and the parking lot standards would still have to be adhered to. The standards are already in the Code to minimize conflicts which would force people to have to walk through a parking lot.

Commissioner Leonard raised a question regarding building design standards and saw the building orientation toward the street but didn't see any guide to what the façade should look like. Mr. Thornton said that the opt-in did not require a certain architectural standard.

Commissioner Leonard talked about a longer range view of development and believed that people remembered buildings, but not necessarily landscaping. He would like to see architectural standards implemented city-wide. Mr. Thornton said that they encouraged people to do the right thing by reducing some of the requirements such as landscaping and setbacks which would increase the amount of buildable area for more of an urban standard versus a suburban standard. He added that if it was found that this over time did not work, staff could go back to the community to see where the support was and modify the overlay to include some architectural features.

Commissioner Eslami asked if there was an architectural committee for the new buildings. Mr. Thornton said there was not a review committee. He confirmed that the 24 Road corridor guidelines provided some articulation and various requirements for development and, furthermore, Horizon Drive had a business district but no architectural requirements.

Commissioner Reece asked if the incentive program improvement table was amendable. Mr. Thornton said that it was amendable. If there was any additional emphasis that the Planning Commission wanted to add, that could be amended. Also, if the business community didn't respond in a way that made sense architecturally, staff and/or the Advisory Committee could go back to the community. The Planning Commission could request that be looked at for inclusion in the overlay.

Commissioner Eslami asked why not include some restrictions now. Chairman Wall interjected that he believed there was a lot more time for some of these items to be discussed more fully, but felt the overlay as it was now, with the understanding that

there would be opportunity to amend or add to it at a later date, was adequate as presented.

Public Comment

Kevin Bray, appeared as a member of the North Avenue Advisory Committee, and gave a little history. He said that the committee was created almost a year ago with 15 to 20 members of primarily business owners, City staff have attended as needed, two commercial real estate experts and the committee had benefited from Councilman Susuras (City Council) and Commissioner Eslami (Planning Commission). He reiterated that the mandatory standards were a result of the marriage between the 2007 East Plan and the 2011 West Plan and the right-of-way requirement was a previous requirement and pointed out that there was really no new regulation being requested. He said that the opt-in standards provided flexibility in design and would provide property and business owners a reason to reinvest in their properties. The site upgrade point system really gave people a way to upgrade their site without going through a full redevelopment and gave them options to upgrade the corridor. As the priorities were developed, the main focus of the steering committee was having a safe, cohesive look along the corridor and the public infrastructure. The focus was the ability to redevelop infrastructure and provide incentives for property and business owners to invest in the public side. Mr. Bray encouraged the Committee to approve this document. He also pointed out that this was a joint process between the business community, the property owners and the City.

Discussion

Commissioner Eslami thanked all of the people involved and the City staff for their time they had invested in this project. In order to successfully do this giant and complicated project, two things were needed – lots of money and a miracle. He felt that with the cooperation of the citizens who can envision the future, this miracle could be accomplished. He stressed that those people could not give up and hoped that the City would not give up on them.

Commissioner Williams agreed with the plan and believed it was a good plan for North Avenue's development and redevelopment. He liked the options it provided to the business owners and thought the direction that this plan took offered less traffic conflicts. He said that he was fully in favor of this plan.

Commissioner Leonard said that he thought it was a good start and reiterated that he would like to see more consideration by the City for the architectural design. He too thanked the people for their work and time put into this.

Chairman Wall stated that he liked the plan and thought a lot of work had been put into it. He added that the overlay projects were more challenging as there were a lot more things to consider. He went back to a statement made previously by Mr. Bray that this was a public infrastructure project that dealt with safety.

MOTION: (Commissioner Williams) “Mr. Chairman, on File ZCA-2012-572, an amendment to the Zoning and Development Code (Title 21 of the Grand Junction Municipal Code), to add an overlay zone district for North Avenue, I move that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval of the proposed amendment with findings, facts and conclusions listed in the staff report.”

Commissioner Reece seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 7 - 0.

General Discussion/Other Business

None.

Nonscheduled Citizens and/or Visitors

None.

Adjournment

With no objection and no further business, the Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.