



**Department of Planning and Development**

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**MEETING MINUTES (APPROVED)**

**PLAN COMMISSION**

Location: Videoconference (Zoom)

6:30 pm; Wednesday, May 31, 2023

The Plan Commission held its regular session via video conference on Wednesday, May 31, 2023. The meeting commenced at 6:30 pm and concluded at 8:17 pm.

**Call to Order – (6:30 pm)** Chairwoman Holly called the meeting to order.

**1. Roll Call**

Present

Al Fleischer Jr.

Charles Gascon – joined at 7:05 pm

Ellen Hartz

Mark Harvey – joined at 7:15 pm

Margaret Holly

Patricia McQueen

Tori Gonzalez

Jeff Hales (Council Liaison)

Staff Present

John Wagner, Director of Planning & Development

Mary Kennedy, Planner

John Mulligan, City Attorney

**2. Approval of Minutes**

- a. February 24, 2023 Plan Commission meeting minutes were approved with no changes.
- b. March 30, 2023 Plan Commission meeting minutes were approved with no changes.
- c. April 26, 2023 Plan Commission meeting minutes were approved with no changes.

**3. Public Comments – none**

**4. Old Business – none**

**5. New Business**

a. **Comprehensive Plan Update – planning NEXT**

Sarah Kelly of planning NEXT presented an update on the City's comprehensive planning process and asked Plan Commissioners to provide feedback on the future character and land use map and place types. Ms. Kelly emphasized the importance of using a character-based approach rather than a solely land use-based approach, the latter being a more traditional tool for land use planning. The future character and land use map will be a tool for staff, the Plan Commission, and the City Council to guide future development, evaluate changes to the City's zoning code, and to help better regulate physical form. Ms. Kelly also explained that in addition to the future character and land use map, the comprehensive plan will recommend policies, programs, and projects.

Chair Holly suggested that the comprehensive plan also help guide "builders" of housing and smaller scale buildings who are not necessarily "developers."

There was some discussion about reestablishing or better utilizing the Infill Review Board (IRB), which as it stands now requires 75% of residents to initiate review of infill to convene the board. Council Member Hales suggested that creating an Architectural Review Board (ARB) made up of architects from University City might be a better route and could replace the IRB. Dr. Wagner, Director of Planning & Development, confirmed that establishing an ARB is in the City's work plan, but will be on hold until the City updates its zoning ordinance following adoption of the comprehensive plan.

Shelby Oldroyd of planning NEXT presented the draft character/place types. Chair Holly asked for clarification on how "smaller lots" vs "larger lots" would be defined in the plan. Ms. Oldroyd and Ms. Kelly explained that the character types can be described with imagery, or they can be more prescriptive with dimensions. Ms. Kelly gave an overview of the future character and land use map and then opened for questions and discussion.

Commissioner Fleischer asked what feedback we have gotten from the community on density, walkability, vacancy, redevelopment, etc. Ms. Kelly explained that people have said they want to see more activity in certain areas, such as on Olive or in the Loop, and that there was a lot of support for neighborhood nodes. Mary Kennedy, Senior Planner, added that we received several comments to bring more activity into the Loop and specifically infill on parking lots in the Loop. Ms. Oldroyd added that there were many comments on improving safety and access for walking and biking.

Commissioner Fleischer asked for clarification on how much change is being recommended to land use, such as for the areas designated "Innovation District" and "Regional Retail District." Commissioner Gascon responded that development is long-term and that realistically, there will not be large changes in land use across the city, citing the Market at Olive development as a project that has been ongoing for 5-7 years. Commissioner McQueen added that we must also be conscious of our past with redlining and urban renewal. Commissioner Holly added that it's important to lead with the goals and objectives of the plan, such as supporting housing variety and affordability, and then present the map. She also emphasized the importance of using existing U City residential images for the character types to avoid confusion and clarify that the City is *not* recommending large scale redevelopment of neighborhoods.

There was some discussion about the character types and commissioners asked for some clarification on how to differentiate the commercial and mixed-use character types, such as Community Corridor and Activity Center. There was some agreement that the Loop needs to be treated slightly differently.

Council Member Hales added that the third ward does not have Activity Centers like Jackson & Pershing, due to the planning practices and development trends at the time.

Commissioner Gonzalez shared some excerpts from a plan for the West End neighborhood in the City of St. Louis that aim to uplift existing community members and to improve quality of life without displacing residents.

Commissioner Gascon reminded the Plan Commission that U City is not growing, so it's unlikely there will be an influx of new residents to support significant increased density across the City, but that we should be thinking about increasing housing options in areas with better amenities and access.

John Mulligan, City Attorney, asked whether a future zoning code update would involve switching to a form-based zoning code, changing existing use classifications within existing zoning districts, etc. Mr. Mulligan requested a comparison of existing zoning to the future land

use map to see where future zoning changes would be needed. Council Member Hales agreed that this comparison would be helpful. Dr. Wagner added that there's a range of approaches to zoning changes that could support implementation of the comprehensive plan, including form-based if the Plan Commission and Council decide to go in that direction.

Council Member Hales pointed out a couple parcels that are shown as Parks, Recreation, and Open Space that are currently commercial. Commissioner Gascon explained that some of these, particularly at Olive & Midland are problematic for redevelopment in the floodplain, and are therefore suggested to be reserved for green space or low-impact development with stricter standards for stormwater mitigation.

Commissioners Holly and Hartz re-emphasized the importance of addressing the history of redlining and housing segregation and their impacts on the community.

There was some additional discussion about the legal basis of the comprehensive plan and its role as a policy guide for the City.

Ms. Kelly wrapped up the presentation with an overview of the upcoming community engagement opportunities in July and August.

**6. Other Business** – none

**7. Reports**

- a. **Housing & Third Ward Revitalization Task Force Report:** Commissioner McQueen reported that a consultant has been hired and they will schedule a meeting with the Task Force. Chair Holly asked if the Task Force has connected with the Commission on Senior Issues and Commissioner McQueen responded that they have not yet.
- b. **Council Liaison Report:** Council Member Hales reported that Washington University is currently reviewing a condition to their Conditional Use Permit (CUP) before formally presenting the CUP to the Council for approval.

**8. Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.