

BRAINERD PLANNING COMMISSION

Wednesday, September 11, 2013

6:00 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers

1. Call to Order
2. Approval/Amendment of Agenda
3. Approval of minutes of the regular meeting of August 14, 2013

4. NEW BUSINESS

Quiet Zones – Presentation by City Engineer Jeff Hulsether

5. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Whittier Property Zoning Ordinance Amendment Process
 - i. Draft “Community Center” Definition
 - ii. Draft Conditional Use Permit Language
 - b. Small House and Infill Development
 - i. Draft Conditional Use Permit Language
 - ii. Draft Infill Standards Review
6. Commissioners’ Questions/Comments
 - i. Speed Limits – Chairman Jay
 - ii. Methadone Clinic – Chairman Jay
 7. City Planner Report
 8. Adjournment

Any individual needing special accommodations please call 218/828-2309

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wednesday, August 14, 2013

Chairman Mike Jay called the meeting of the Brainerd Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Noted present were Commissioners Pritschet, Hayden, Jay, Norwood, and Cole. Noted absent were Commissioners Plantenberg and Lambert. Also present was City Planner Ostgarden.

#2 Approval/Amendment of Agenda

MOTION AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PRITSCHET AND NORWOOD, DULY CARRIED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

#3 Approve minutes of the regular meeting and workshop of July 10, 2013

MOTION AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS NORWOOD AND COLE, DULY CARRIED, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING AND WORKSHOP OF JUNE 12, 2013.

#4 NEW BUSINESS

NONE

#5 OLD BUSINESS

a. Whittier Property Zoning Ordinance Amendment Process

City Planner Ostgarden stated tonight discussion will be on the zoning ordinance amendment process and the details will be handled at a later date.

City Planner Ostgarden gave a presentation to the Commission which included options on how to amend the Zoning Ordinance, community center definitions, and the process to add the community center land use to the residential zoning district.

The Commission held discussion on how to proceed and which zoning amendment option should be used and why the other options should not be used.

The Commission agreed that adding the definition of community center as a conditional use in an R-1 District was the best option.

The Commission held discussion on the definition of a community center. The suggested definition was:

“A building or buildings and associated property usually owned and operated by a public and/or nonprofit group or agency used for public and/or nonprofit group offices and any combination of recreational, social, educational, or cultural activities”

Discussion was held on the importance of the ownership by a nonprofit being included in the definition and the use of the word “usually”.

The Commission agreed to remove the words “usually” and “owned”.

The Commission agreed to change the language to state “to be used for two or more of the following purposed”.

Discussion was held regarding the restriction of alcohol sales and consumption, the sale of goods/merchandise, serving the community and the language of “multipurpose”.

The Commission agreed that the sale of goods/merchandise should be part of the conditional use review process.

The Commission agreed to addition “to serve the community”.

The Commission agreed to add language restricting the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages.

The Commission agreed specific types of uses can be added in the ordinance language.

The Commission agreed on the following rough draft language:

“A building or buildings and associated property operated by a public and/or nonprofit group or agency that serves the community that is used for three or more of the following uses: public and/or nonprofit group offices, recreational, social, educational, or cultural activities with no alcoholic sales or consumption”

Chairman Jay asked for a compilation of ideas for permitted uses at a community center.

b. Small House and Infill Updates

City Planner Ostgarden stated he provided the Commission with a memo regarding vacant lots within the community by using a \$20,000 maximum value and maximum size of ½ acre. The total parcels was 358. He stated out of the 358, 92 would be appropriate for infill discussion. He noted this did not include non-developed lots within the new subdivisions.

Commissioner Cole asked for a list of the vacant lots that may be owned by the adjacent property owner with the intention of keeping them vacant.

City Planner Ostgarden stated some Commission members were able to tour a 300 square foot house. He passed out pictures of the home. He noted there several smaller homes in this area so it doesn't look out of place.

City Planner Ostgarden put together a draft amendment to the zoning ordinance and how the language could possibly be added.

Ideas were discussed such as parking, garages, splitting lots to create two small home lots, design standards including roof type, and two small homes on one lot. The groups associated with small homes such as travelling retirees and minimalists.

The Commission agreed it is good to have language regarding this for future use even if it's not an issue at this time.

Discussion was held regarding minimum square footage. It would be footprint not livable space. The current minimum is 750 square feet and the proposed for small homes would be 350 square feet.

The Commission agreed to start with a minimum square footage of 350 square feet.

The Commission requested the City Planner make some changes to the draft language to present at the September Planning Commission meeting.

City Planner Ostgarden stated the small home language will be set up as a conditional use permit. He stated it's important for the neighborhood and compatibility to add it as a conditional use.

#6 Commissioners' Questions/Comments

Commissioner Pritschet stated the Big Wiff tournament will be this Saturday at Bane Park to raise funds for the Miracle Field and asked people to come show their support.

Commissioner Jay stated Miracle Field is a handicap accessible field that is proposed to be built at Bane Park and is a great potential for our community.

Commissioner Jay stated the manhole repair on College Drive is great but there are still others that need to be corrected.

Commissioner Jay stated the College Drive project has been a great asset along with the trail. He also stated the new Buffalo Hills trail is another great asset.

#7 City Planner's Report

City Planner Ostgarden stated there was an AARP poll in a magazine and according to that poll of the millennial generation there are only 38% that are interested in home ownership.

#8 Adjournment

As there was no further business the meeting adjourned to the workshop at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner

/lt

MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mark Ostgarden, City Planner *MO*

DATE: September 3, 2013

RE: Whittier Property Repurposing – Draft Community Center Definition and Draft Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to Residential District Conditional Use Permits

At the August 14, 2013 meeting the Planning Commission reviewed “*community center*” definitions and a draft Zoning Ordinance amendment to permit “community centers” as a conditional use in residential districts.

DEFINITION

Following is the draft definition that received consensus at the August 14th meeting:

COMMUNITY CENTER. “A BUILDING OR BUILDINGS AND ASSOCIATED PROPERTY OPERATED BY A PUBLIC AND/OR NONPROFIT GROUP OR AGENCY THAT SERVES THE COMMUNITY THAT IS USED FOR THREE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING USES: PUBLIC AND/OR NONPROFIT GROUP OFFICES, RECREATIONAL, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL, OR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES WITH NO ALCOHOLIC SALES OR CONSUMPTION”

After reviewing the amended definition draft it reads as if more emphasis is placed on the office use being a part of a community center rather than the recreational, social education or cultural activities. Following is the same definition with “*public and/or nonprofit group offices*” relocated in the definition:

COMMUNITY CENTER. "A BUILDING OR BUILDINGS AND ASSOCIATED PROPERTY OPERATED BY A PUBLIC AND/OR NONPROFIT GROUP OR AGENCY THAT SERVES THE COMMUNITY THAT IS USED FOR THREE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING USES: RECREATIONAL, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL, OR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES WITH NO ALCOHOLIC SALES OR CONSUMPTION AND PUBLIC AND/OR NONPROFIT GROUP OFFICES"

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT DRAFT

Following is the Zoning Ordinance Conditional Use Permit amendment that received consensus:

COMMUNITY CENTERS SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. NO INDIVIDUAL AGENCY OR ACTIVITY EXTERIOR ENTRANCES
2. HOURS ARE LIMITED TO 7:00 A.M. TO 12:00 A.M.
3. NO EXTERIOR AGENCY OR ACTIVITY SIGNS
4. NO ALCOHOL SALES OR CONSUMPTION
5. MERCHANDISE SALES PERMITTED FOR NON PROFIT AND/OR NONPROFIT AGENCIES

Suggested operational hours have been added to #2. The term "*agency*" is used in #1 and #3. The term "*organization*" may be a better description for the type of sign.

Should the Planning Commission finalize language for a public hearing, it should consider the amendment for all three (3) residential districts (R-1, R-2 and R-3).

COMMISSIONER SURVEY RESPONSE

On August 21st the Planning Department sent an e-mail with a draft definition and Zoning Ordinance amendment. The e-mail requested Commissioners responses (requested at the August 14th meeting). As of the date of this e-mail two (2) Commissioners have responded.

MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mark Ostgarden, City Planner



DATE: September 4, 2013

RE: Small Houses and Infill Development

At its August 2013 meeting the Planning Commission reviewed a draft amendment to the R-1 (Single Family Residential) District language to add text to permit small houses and to add text related to infill standards. The Commission agreed that the small house option should be added to provide the option even though there may not be a demand or market for small houses at this time. The Planning Commission concurred that three hundred fifty (350) square feet should be the minimum dwelling size permitted and that dwellings less than seven hundred fifty (750) square feet should be permitted by conditional use permit. At the meeting there was also discussion about the draft infill standards.

Attached is a draft of the R-1 District with text to permit small houses by Conditional Use Permit. It does not include the infill standards. Should a small house be proposed, design and appearance can be reviewed during the approval process. If necessary conditions can be imposed for neighborhood compatibility.

Attached is another R-1 District draft that along with small house amendments includes draft infill standards. While working on the infill draft it occurred to me while we are all using the term "infill" and we each have an idea of what the term means, a definition should be provided to try and reduce any questions about what "infill" means. Following are several definitions I have been able to assemble:

- ***Infill lot*** means any lot which is bounded on one or more **sides** by lots with existing residences **in an established neighborhood**. For the purpose of this definition, initial construction of new residences on the Glen shall not be classified as infill lots.
- The lot is surrounded on at least three sides by development consistent with that planned for the surrounding property according to the applicable community plan or is contained within an infill area designated for infill development in the general plan or applicable community plan. An infill area is an area which is surrounded on at least three sides by

development consistent with that planned for the surrounding property according to the applicable community plan and for which development would not normally occur because of economic or physical site constraints.

- **Lot, Infill:** Any vacant lot or parcel which meets all of the following: 1) served by sewers 2) fronts an existing public street 3) bounded on two or more sides by lots one acre in size or smaller with residential structures.
- “Urban infill” means the development of vacant parcels in otherwise built-up areas where public facilities such as sewer systems, roads, schools, and recreation areas are already in place and the average residential density is at least five dwelling units per acre,
- Residential development on a parcel or tract of land that shares a common lot line with at least two existing single-family homes and is located within a residential zone district. Infill development will generally occur on parcels less than one (1) acre in size located within established single-family neighborhoods; however, some larger parcels may also be included in this definition.

Should the Planning Commission desire to continue the infill discussion it should consider including an “infill” definition in that discussion.

In reviewing the infill draft it does not address neighborhood compatibility for dwellings larger than seven hundred fifty (750) square feet. For example is a split entry dwelling infill appropriate in a one story dwelling block front. As stated earlier in the memo neighborhood compatibility for dwellings less than seven hundred fifty (750) square feet can be addressed by the CUP process.

It appears additional infill discussion is needed to discuss the definition and neighborhood compatibility issue.

SECTION 54
R-1, SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

SMALL HOUSE DRAFT

Section:

- 515-54-1: Purpose and Intent
- 515-54-2: Permitted Uses
- 515-54-3: Accessory Uses
- 515-54-4: Interim Uses
- 515-54-5: Conditional Uses
- 515-54-6: Uses by Administrative Permit
- 515-54-7: Lot Area and Setback Requirements
- 515-54-8: Building Height
- 515-54-9: Building Performance Standards
- 515-54-10: Lot Coverage

515-54-1: Purpose and Intent. This district is established to allow and preserve areas in the City of quiet neighborhoods of one and two family homes, free from other uses except those which are compatible with residents of such a district.

515-54-2: Permitted Uses.

- A. Detached single family dwellings.
- B. Public recreation areas and related accessory buildings and structures.
- C. Residential facilities serving six (6) or fewer persons in a single family detached dwelling.
- D. Essential services as regulated by Section 36 of this Ordinance.

515-54-3: Accessory Uses.

- A. Garages and open off-street parking for private residential use subject to the provisions of Section 17.
- B. Fences as regulated by Section 19 of this Ordinance.
- C. Storage of recreational vehicles and equipment for private use as regulated by Section 24 of this Ordinance.
- D. Solar energy systems and structures.

- E. Home Businesses as regulated by Section 26 of this Ordinance.
- F. Tool houses and sheds and other such buildings for the storage of domestic tools, supplies and equipment subject to the provisions of Section 17 of this Ordinance.
- G. Private recreational facilities for the enjoyment of the residents of the principal building and their occasional guests.
- H. In home day care serving fourteen (14) or fewer persons in a single family detached dwelling.
- I. Radio and television receiving antennas, satellite dishes, TV Receive Only (TVRO) three (3) meters or less in diameter, short-wave radio dispatching antennas, or those necessary for the operation of electronic equipment including radio receivers, ham radio transmitters and television receivers as regulated by Section 35 of this Ordinance.

515-54-4: Interim Uses.

- A. Home Extended Businesses as regulated by Section 26 of this Ordinance.
- B. Temporary buildings associated with a public or private principal school building and used for classrooms.

515-54-5: Conditional Uses.

- A. Off-premise surface parking lots and parking ramps subject to provisions of Section 22 of this Ordinance.
- B. Bed and breakfast subject to provisions of Section 31 of this Ordinance.
- C. Non-profit and not-for-profit offices located in buildings owned by the Brainerd Independent School District, not used for classroom education and subject to the following minimum requirements:
 - 1. One (1) off-street parking space for each three hundred (300) square feet of office space.
 - 2. No individual exterior entrances.
 - 3. Business hours are limited from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
 - 4. No exterior business signs.

- D. Planned Unit Developments as regulated by Section 11 of this Ordinance.
- E. Government and public regulated utility buildings and structures necessary for the health, safety and general welfare of the community provided that when abutting a residential use in a residential use district, the property is screened and landscaped in accordance with Section 20 of this Ordinance.
- F. Public and private schools provided that:
 - 1. The site accesses a major collector.
 - 2. The site is landscaped in accordance with Section 20 of this Ordinance.
 - 3. Off-street parking is provided in accordance with Section 22 of this Ordinance.
 - 4. Off-street loading and service entrances are provided as regulated by Section 23 of this Ordinance.
 - 5. Emergency vehicle access is provided to and within the site.
- G. Hospitals provided that:
 - 1. Side yards are double the minimum requirements established for this district and are screened in compliance with Section 20 of this Ordinance.
 - 2. The site shall be served by an arterial or collector street of sufficient capacity to accommodate traffic which will be generated.
 - 3. All State Statutes and regulations governing such use are strictly adhered to and all required operating permits are secured.
- H. Places of worship and related buildings provided that:
 - 1. Side yards shall be thirty (30) feet.
 - 2. Adequate screening from abutting residential uses and landscaping is provided in compliance with Section 20 of this Ordinance.
 - 3. Adequate off-street parking and access is provided on the site or on lots directly abutting or directly across a public street or alley to the principal use in compliance with Section 22 of this Ordinance and that such parking is adequately screened and landscaped from surrounding and abutting residential uses in compliance with Section 20 of this Ordinance.
 - 4. Adequate off-street loading and service entrances are provided and regulated where applicable by Section 23 of this Ordinance.

515-54-6: Uses by Administrative Permit.

- A. Personal wireless service antennas as regulated by Section 35 of this Ordinance.

515-54-7: Minimum Lot Area and Setback Requirements.

A. Lot Area Requirements:

1. Lot size: Seven thousand (7,000) square feet
2. Lot Width: Fifty (50) feet
3. Lot Depth: Lot depth shall not exceed three (3) times the lot width for the buildable area of the lot

B. Principal Building Setbacks:

1. Front Yard: Twenty (20) feet
2. Side Yard: Five (5) feet
3. Side Yard (corner): Twenty (20) feet, fifteen (15) feet for an attached garage
4. Rear Yard: Twenty-five (25) feet

C. Accessory Building and Structure Setbacks:

1. Front Yard: Twenty (20) feet
2. Side Yard: Three (3) feet
3. Side Yard (corner): Fifteen (15) feet, twenty (20) feet if garage faces street
4. Rear Yard: Five (5) feet

515-54-8: Building Height.

- A. Dwellings shall not exceed thirty-five (35) feet in height. Permitted non-residential uses and conditional uses taller than thirty-five (35) feet shall require a Conditional Use Permit.
- B. Accessory building and structure height shall be governed by Section 17 of this Ordinance.

515-54-9: Building Performance Standards.

- A. Minimum floor area per dwelling unit: Seven hundred fifty (750) feet. DWELLINGS GREATER THAN THREE HUNDRED SQUARE FEET (350) AND LESS THAN SEVEN HUNDRED FIFTY (750) SQUARE FEET ARE PERMITTED BY CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT AND SUBJECT TO 515-54-11: INFILL DESIGN STANDARDS.
- B. Minimum width/length of dwelling unit: Twenty-two (22) feet. DWELLINGS LESS THAN TWENTY-TWO (22) FEET WIDE ARE PERMITTED BY CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT.
- C. Each dwelling unit shall be located on a permanent foundation with a perimeter curtain wall in accordance with the Brainerd and Minnesota Building Code.

515-54-10: Lot Coverage.

- A. Residential Uses. Impervious surface lot coverage shall not exceed sixty (60) percent of the total lot area.
- B. Non-residential Uses. Impervious surface lot coverage shall not exceed fifty (50) percent of the total lot area unless otherwise allowed by a grading and drainage plan approved by the City Engineer.

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SMALL HOUSE AND INFILL DRAFT

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515-54-11: DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

ALL RESIDENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND NEW DWELLINGS LESS THAN SEVEN HUNDRED FIFTY (750) SQUARE FEET IN AREA AND/OR DWELLINGS LESS THAN TWENTY-TWO (22) FEET WIDE SHALL ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING DESIGN REQUIREMENTS. WHILE CREATIVITY AND VARIATION IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IS ENCOURAGED, THE PURPOSE OF THESE REQUIREMENTS IS TO ENSURE COMPATIBILITY OF INFILL DEVELOPMENT WITH THE CHARACTER OF NEARBY EXISTING RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES.

RESIDENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT SHALL MEET THE FOLLOWING DESIGN CRITERIA, AS DEFINED BY THE PREDOMINANT CHARACTER OF THE EXISTING RESIDENTIAL BLOCK FRONT. THE BLOCK FRONT SHALL CONSIST OF ALL RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES ALONG BOTH SIDES OF THE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE RIGHT-OF-WAY ON WHICH THE DEVELOPMENT FRONTS. THE BLOCK FRONT SHALL BE MEASURED FROM INTERSECTION TO INTERSECTION, TO THE ROAD END, OR 200 FEET IN EITHER DIRECTION FROM THE DEVELOPMENT SITE, WHICHEVER IS NEAREST.

1. BUILDING ORIENTATION ON INFILL LOTS SHALL MATCH THE PREDOMINANT ORIENTATION OF OTHER BUILDINGS ALONG THE BLOCK FRONT.
2. ACCESS AND LOCATION OF OFF-STREET PARKING ON INFILL LOTS SHALL BE SIMILAR TO THE PREDOMINANT CHARACTER FOR EXISTING DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE BLOCK FRONT. PRIMARY VEHICULAR ACCESS SHALL BE THROUGH REAR ALLEYS WHERE SUCH RIGHTS-OF-WAY EXIST, AND ON-SITE PARKING SHALL BE LOCATED TO THE REAR OF PROPOSED STRUCTURES, INsofar AS THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE PREDOMINANT CHARACTER OF THE BLOCK FRONT.
3. ROOFS ON PROPOSED INFILL RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES SHALL BE SIMILAR IN SLOPE AND STYLE TO EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND SHALL INCORPORATE ANY OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING FEATURES, INsofar AS SUCH FEATURES ARE COMPATIBLE WITH EXISTING DEVELOPMENT ON THE BLOCK FRONT:
 - A. DORMERS;
 - B. GABLED OR HIPPED ROOFS;
 - C. PITCHED ROOFS;
 - D. PARAPETS OR CORNICES.
4. UNLESS IT IS THE PREDOMINANT EXISTING STYLE ON THE BLOCK FRONT, FLAT ROOFS SHALL NOT BE ALLOWED.
5. HORIZONTAL FACADES LONGER THAN 25 FEET SHALL BE TREATED TO REDUCE BUILDINGS MASS AND VISUAL BULK USING AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TECHNIQUES. THE APPLICANT SHALL DEMONSTRATE THAT THE SELECTED TECHNIQUES ARE EITHER CURRENTLY PRESENT ON THE BLOCK FRONT OR ARE NOT SUBSTANTIALLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH EXISTING DEVELOPMENT.

- A. BAYS OR RECESSES (MINIMUM DEPTH OF 18 INCHES);
- B. WINDOW PATTERNS;
- C. CONTRASTING MATERIALS OR COLORS;
- D. UPPER STORY SETBACKS;
- E. BALCONIES.

Where is Northfield headed: Suburb or sustainable?

By JACI SMITH jsmith@faribault.com | Posted: Tuesday, August 20, 2013 1:57 pm

At a Planning Commission meeting last week, during a discussion of proposed changes to the city's 300-page Land Development Code, consultant Bill Weber said he was helping to craft modifications that brought the look of pre-WWII to Northfield's new home developments.

Characterized by smaller lots, garages set far back and nearly unseen, facades open and close to the street to encourage neighborhood interaction, such development de-emphasized an automobile culture.

A week earlier, the City Council at a work session was discussing a report submitted by the Northfield Downtown Development Corporation on downtown parking, when a councilor made the observation that at least a couple of the report's recommendations were on target in "reducing car volume downtown and sending a message to the community about alternative forms of transportation."

Then there is the proposed TIGER Trail, which seeks to link up east and west Northfield for pedestrians and bikers, but at \$2.3 million is one of the most expensive non-motorized focused transportation projects the city has undertaken. Despite being repeatedly bogged down by cost increases and process delays, the project continues to move forward.

All of which begs the question: Are Northfield city leaders trying to impose non-motorized transportation on the community?

History informs the present

It's more complicated than that, says city Community Development Director Chris Heineman.

But to understand where Northfield finds itself today, you have to go back to the documents upon which most of today's development and growth decisions are being based.

The year 2008 was a big one in the city. After a long and exhaustive process, the city council enacted its new Comprehensive Plan. A quick glimpse at the document shows the community feedback at the time made non-motorized transportation a high priority.

Chapter 4 on land use notes that its principles should be used to provide an "attractive public realm that better connects places in the community, serve neighborhoods and better serve non-motorized forms of transportation."

It goes on to note that astute planning is needed to better integrate non-motorized transportation users with their motorized counterparts, who “unfortunately” tend to dominate the infrastructure.

The plan’s transportation chapter is culled from the more in-depth city transportation plan, which had been approved earlier the same year. That plan’s summary is more blunt: It notes that far fewer Northfield residents drive alone to work in the Twin Cities than in other communities in Minnesota, that more than a quarter walk or bike to work and that as a result, the city’s transportation needs are different.

Several of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan suggest a strong emphasis on non-motorized transportation, including promoting its use, establishing biking as a safe and sustainable mode of transportation in the city and establishing trails and on-street routes to facilitate that use.

That same year, the city also formed the Non-Motorized Transportation Task Force to “promote and achieve many of the non-motorized transportation priorities” of the Comprehensive Plan, according to city documents. The city also received a \$30,000 grant to study the creation of safer routes to three of Northfield’s schools. One of the suggestions from the resulting report, presented to the city council in 2010, is the impetus for the creation of today’s TIGER Trail.

Certainly, the current iteration of the Land Development Code is informed directly by those 2008 documents, Heineman said. And so is the city’s ongoing discussion about parking downtown, although both a study done in 2001 and the most recent one clearly note there is not a shortage of parking downtown in general.

But focusing on transportation is only one small piece of the bigger picture, said former city councilor Betsey Buckheit, who served on the Non-Motorized Task Force.

What’s unfolding now, Buckheit said, is really a discussion about building a sustainable community — sustainable in more ways than one.

Two sides of the same city

Development Director Heineman agrees. He called it the argument of “capitalism vs. democracy,” although he openly acknowledges there are probably far better names for both sides of the issue.

On the “democracy” side is the citizen input that drove the focus of the Comprehensive Plan in 2008. From that plan came the Land Development Code, which strongly reflects some locals’ philosophical reaction to perceived suburban sprawl in Northfield.

“Sprawl is essentially unlimited non-contiguous growth that extends outward from the urban area to rural areas,” Heineman said. Although Northfield is much smaller than most communities

where the term “sprawl” applies, the thought process behind the LDC, the rules that uphold the city’s comp plan, is to avoid that.

Buckheit agreed and offered an example.

“I can look at a map of Northfield and see where each development was approved,” she said.

“There are great houses on large lots with lots of little streets around them, but no connectors to the rest of the community.”

On the “capitalism” side are the market forces that seem uninterested in the kind of sustainable development initiatives that are the basis for the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code.

Three developers spoke publicly at the August Planning Commission meeting where changes to the LDC for the construction of multi-car garages was being discussed. All three noted that their clients were looking for modern homes with multi-car garages and not the kind of pre-WWII development consultant Weber outlined.

The Planning Commission ultimately rejected the suggested changes with at least two members indicating skepticism that sustainable development initiatives are really what most Northfielders want.

On Tuesday, Building Official Jim Kessler backed up the claims of the three developers, noting that his office has seen an increase in new home construction permits and that nearly all of them are traditional new home construction featuring three-car garages.

Newer U.S. Census figures from the 2007-2011 American Community Survey now say more than 60 percent of Northfielders who work are hopping in a car and driving on average 19.5 miles to get there. One in four work at home and 15 percent either walk or use another method of transportation to get to work.

But it’s not just about whether you can have a three-car garage in Northfield, because you obviously can, Heineman said. Buckheit called the garage debate at the Planning Commission a “red herring.” The “capitalism” vs. “democracy” divide shows up in other issues in Northfield as well.

The council discussion of the NDDC’s parking study featured the same debate with some of councilors, led by Suzie Nakasian, strongly encouraging introducing more non-motorized transportation initiatives sooner rather than later. Others, including Mayor Dana Graham, suggested that several of the recommendations listed by the NDDC were already happening and that some of the suggestions from Nakasian didn’t need to happen immediately or right downtown.

“There are people who like to believe that in 20 years we won’t need any parking spots downtown because there won’t be any cars,” Graham said. “There are some who would like to have that happen. But it won’t.”

The proposed TIGER Trail offers another example. When it appeared the lion’s share of the project would be funded by a grant, there was more support for it. But as the cost of the now \$2.3 million project continues to climb — estimates are that the city has now paid between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in planning alone — support for it dwindles even though it is a major non-motorized transportation project in the city.

“I’d have a lot more support for a project like this if it was connected to the Mill Town’s Trail or something,” Graham said Tuesday.

And although “connectivity” is a buzzword that’s found throughout the comp plan and the LDC, when it was offered as one of the reasons why a sidewalk was needed on the east side of Maple Street earlier this year, residents fought hard against it, calling it unnecessary to the street’s reconstruction project.

It’s not just about what type of new homes get built or where their garages sit or how many bike corrals there are on Division Street.

“It’s not an anti-car mentality but rather about the look of the community as a whole against the market forces acting in that community,” Heineman said. “My role is navigating that.”

Where’s the middle ground?

As is usually the case where debate of an issue is concerned, compromise won’t be found in the extremes. When pushed to offer solutions, most turn to the same answer: It’s not mutually exclusive.

Buckheit said that although she is a supporter of sustainable initiatives, for her the bottom line is financial security for the community.

Connectivity means less infrastructure cost. Tighter developments mean fewer roads to pave and re-pave. Small driveways and lawns means less runoff for the city’s sewer system to deal with.

“I get a little frustrated that you focus on one thing,” Buckheit said. “It’s not just about having a pretty downtown, but what over the long term we can sustain on the available tax base.”

Although Graham supports a different vision for Northfield’s future growth, as he’s noted in a variety of public settings, he and Buckheit agree that it won’t be one philosophy or one initiative that ensures success.

“We have to expand the tax base, not learn to live with what we have,” he said. “But that isn’t just a business park or getting a big business to come here. We fight so much among ourselves about

what we want to be. We just have to look at every opportunity as it comes along and as long as it benefits Northfield, we should work to make it happen.”

Heineman, who each day must listen to every side of this issue and weigh it as he executes the policies set by the city’s legislating bodies, sums it up.

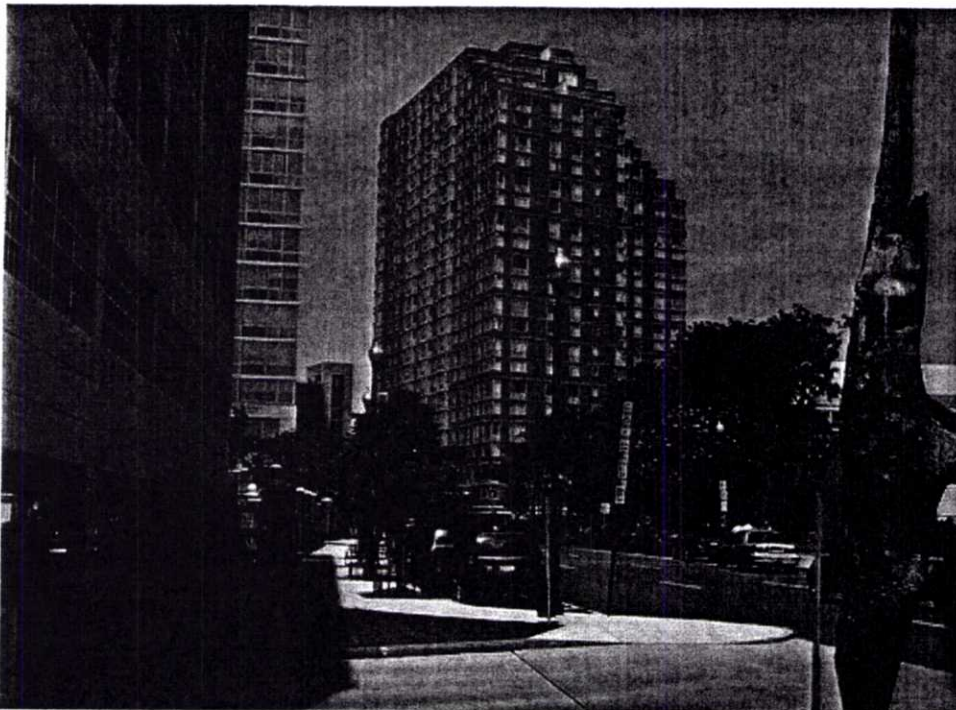
“For sustainable development initiatives to be successful, it is vitally important to balance the desires of the community with the market demands,” Heineman said. “It’s going to be an ongoing process.”

Reach Managing Editor Jaci Smith at 333-3134, or follow her at Twitter.com @FDNJaciSmith

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16 Rules for 'Smarter' Smart Growth

- KAID BENFIELD



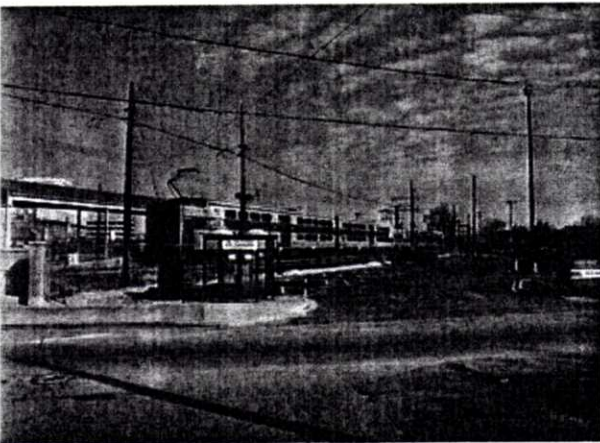
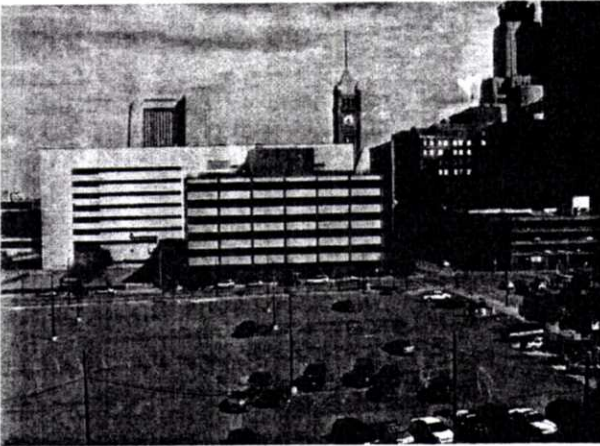
Jacob/Flickr

I hesitate to write yet another article about bringing "smart growth," the combination of ideas born in the 1990s to counter suburban sprawl – into the 21st century. I've long argued that, at a minimum, it's time to update the so-called "ten principle" adopted back then by the Smart Growth Network that emphasize compact development, transportation choices, and so on. We've learned so much since then, about green infrastructure, food, health, green buildings, the merits of moderate density, revitalization and gentrification, and more, that would allow us to make communities even smarter.

But most smart growth advocates remain concentrated on the infill+density+transit formula of the 1990s. The one major addition to the menu that I would recognize since the 1990s has been walkability (and perhaps its cousin, complete streets), and it's an important one. But that's about it, for what the major parts of the smart growth movement spend their time on.

So I was heartened to see a Twitter link earlier this week to an article in the awkwardly named *UrbDeZine San Diego* titled "10 Rules for Smarter Smart Growth." I have company in this lonely quest!

Now, as it turns out, the author of the article, Bill Adams, and I differ in the specific "smarter" ideas that we champion. But what we both have in common is that it's time to get past advocating for the *fact* of smart growth – it's already mainstream in nearly every planning office in the country – and start working on its *quality*.



*Surface parking in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Image courtesy of Zachary Korb/Flickr (left);
Surface parking lot at Metra Electric station. Image courtesy of Steven Vance/Flickr (right)*

Here are Adams's 10 rules:

1. **Purge the term NIMBY from your language and your thinking.** "It stultifies any further understanding of community concerns, or how to reach a compromise." The truth, in my opinion, is that NIMBYs sometimes have a point.
2. **Respect community planning.** It takes seemingly forever, Adams concedes, but it's worth it: "Modern smart growth occurs best through this planning process, not through ad hoc project variances ... Developments that require spot zoning under the smart growth or TOD banner are usually wolves in sheep's clothing."

9. **Prioritize non-auto transportation by creating unique or exclusive pedestrian and bicycle amenities.** Adams argues that walking and cycling routes don't have to be adjacent to driving routes; there are lots of places where they can be tucked in, to great benefit. I agree.
10. **Design for human nature, honed over millions of years, rather than efficiencies and logic, decided upon during the course of design.** "Such design is often counter-intuitive. This concept is exemplified in the attraction of people to small spaces, crowded rooms, and long lines." That's an excellent point, and perhaps also a nod to "original green" thinking. It seldom makes sense to try to outsmart human nature. (I will differ on one point: most humans I know abhor long lines; if they are in one, it's certainly not because of the line.)

I agree with the essence of just about all of these, especially numbers 1, 2, 5 and 6. Adams adds a number 11, as well, **preserve and enhance existing density and urban fabric.** Since that was pretty much my whole point two days ago, I'm certainly not going to disagree now.



Image courtesy of North Charleston/Flickr

Here are four that I would add to make it a round 15:

- **Integrate nature into the community,** especially at the neighborhood scale, as with pocket parks, green infrastructure, street trees and the like. We humans

3. **Integrate with the surrounding community.** "A successful smart growth project recognizes the existing desirable and undesirable neighborhood patterns, and works to fit in with the former and tweak the latter."
4. **In transit oriented developments (TODs), transit orientation should exceed auto orientation.** Adams's point on this one mainly seems to be an argument against parking requirements and provision. As a general rule, the proposition of transit-first, cars-second in TODs should be inarguable (see the egregious example of a 1970s-era, auto-oriented transit station, photo right). But I think there can be sensible provision for parking in TODs; it doesn't have to be all or nothing. Where Adams and I definitely agree is that it isn't TOD unless the transit and development are oriented to one another; having development simply near the station is not enough.
5. **Respect neighborhood character & identity.** "Lack of identity or a negative identity makes increasing neighborhood density difficult. A development that challenges or changes a community's identity architecturally or in terms of land use can undermine the very thing that attracts residents to the neighborhood. Diversity of land uses is good but incompatibility is not. Preserve historic resources and urban fabric." Amen to that.
6. **Increase density incrementally.** "Don't let maximizing density become the enemy of increasing density." I SO agree with that, especially since many of the benefits of smart growth (such as reducing driving and related carbon emissions, and reducing stormwater runoff per capita) are achieved at densities well under 60 dwellings per acre. There are some terrific examples of suburban developments that add density while fitting right in to existing neighborhoods.
7. **Conform to existing "smart" retail corridors and centers.** "A successful smart growth project doesn't add a large amount of retail space on the periphery of an existing successful or resurging commercial district."
8. **Look for opportunities to narrow (verb) streets and vanquish parking lots.** "The antithesis of smart growth and the trademark of sprawl are wide streets, dispersed development, and parking lots." I agree with most of this but think that the first and third of these "sprawl trademarks" are somewhat situational. There are places, for example, where wide, multi-modal boulevards add character and attractiveness to a neighborhood, even a highly urban one. In addition, I know at least one major and highly successful suburban retrofit into a walkable urban center that could not have happened without parking garages. Today it thrives as a true place of multimodal choice. So I would vanquish parking *lots* when opportunities arise, yes, but also incorporate structured and underground parking here and there. There are very few districts in the U.S. that can thrive with no provision for parking at all.

need that sort of thing, and too many developers and municipalities today don't bother.

- **Integrate green technology into buildings and infrastructure.** In this day and age, smart growth just isn't very smart unless it takes every opportunity to reduce emissions and resource consumption. And it's the performance, not the technology, that matters.
- **Employ universal access and age-friendly design.** By 2030, there will be over 40 seniors in the U.S. for every 100 persons of working age. We baby boomers aren't going away, so let's get ready.
- **Make urbanism more family-friendly, too.** We are building better cities with smart growth, but for whom? Do we really want to keep turning a blind eye to such a major segment of our population? In Washington, almost all of the city's population increase over the past decade can be accounted for by an increase in residents between 20 and 35 years old. The number of children younger than 15 dropped by a fifth. I believe we need to change that and, for planners, that means better schools, better parks and playgrounds, and at least some moderate (rather than high) density housing with a little yard space.

Since Adams cheated by adding a "bonus" number 11, I'm adding a bonus number 16: **Pursue communities suitable for a diversity of incomes, housing types, ethnicities, and old/new residents.** That's the future of America; surely it should also be the future of smart growth.

What's a Tree Worth?

A free gadget from the U.S. Forest Service can assess its value in hard cash.

If you happened to be strolling through Chapman Square in Portland, Ore., this past April, you might have come across a curious sight: big, colorful "price tags" hanging from the park's giant elm trees. Every tag said something different—one read, "This tree has given \$20,000 worth of environmental & aesthetic benefits over its lifetime"—but all trumpeted the benefits of trees.

Those tags were part of Portland's first ever Arbor Month. The goal was to get Portlanders to look differently at trees, to see all the ways in which trees are good for the environment and people's health, from decreasing stormwater runoff to reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide to improving air quality. The city declared that for every dollar spent on a tree, an estimated \$3.80 worth of benefits are returned.

So how did Portland come up with that figure, or the \$20,000 figure for that matter? It used a modeling program called i-Tree, a suite of open-source software that allows cities, states and other users to "strengthen their urban forest management and advocacy efforts by quantifying the environmental services that trees provide."

i-Tree helps city foresters make the economic case for growing trees.

Introduced in 2006 by the U.S. Forest Service, i-Tree is in its fifth iteration. It

has inspired cities from Baltimore to New York City to Milwaukee to Portland to set ambitious tree-planting goals. The free program has been downloaded more than 10,000 times so far. With so many states and localities pruning money from parks and tree-planting programs to balance budgets, i-Tree helps public officials put a monetary value on the benefits of growing them.

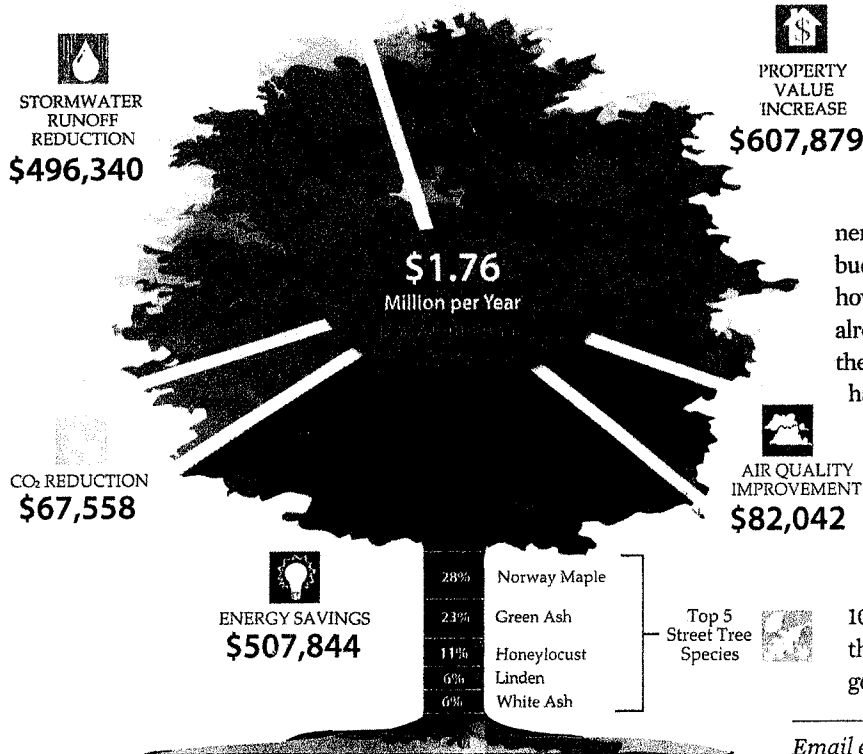
Take Pittsburgh. Last summer, the city approved a master plan for maintaining and expanding its tree canopy over the next 20 years. The decision came after a nonprofit group called Tree Pittsburgh used i-Tree to determine that the trees planted along sidewalks and medians throughout the city provided \$2.4 million worth of environmental and aesthetic value every year. Since the city spends only \$850,000 a year on street planting, that's quite a return on investment: Pittsburgh gets about \$3 in benefits for every dollar it invests in trees.

i-Tree works by calculating the "leaf surface area" of a city and assigning the canopy an economic value. The value comes from the environmental services trees provide, such as how much ozone, particulates and nitrogen are removed from the air; how much carbon is stored; the effect on building heating and cooling costs; and trees' effect on hydrology, among other factors.

One especially neat feature is a module that links to Google Maps. It helps city foresters, homeowners and other users see the effects a tree would have if planted in a specific place. Researchers want the next version, which will likely be released in 2014, to enable modeling of trees and their benefits to ecosystems 30 to 50 years into the future.

For now, i-Tree is just a basic calculator that helps proponents make an economic case for why trees should be in the budget. A growing body of knowledge on the benefits of trees, however, could make i-Tree's job even easier. Research has already shown that trees increase property values (see "Where the Birds Are," *Governing*, July 2012). And now, a new study has found that living near trees dramatically improves health.

Conducted over 18 years, research from the U.S. Forest Service has found a correlation between tree loss and human mortality. According to their findings, the loss of trees was associated with about seven additional deaths per year from respiratory causes and almost 17 additional deaths per year from cardiovascular causes per 100,000 adults. That, say researchers, comes out to more than 21,000 deaths in total. It seems trees have a value that goes far beyond dollars and cents. **G**



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