

BRAINERD PLANNING COMMISSION

Wednesday, August 17, 2016
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 held on July 20, 2016.
4. NEW BUSINESS
 - a) Review of the Crow Wing County Housing and Redevelopment Authority Redevelopment Plan
5. PUBLIC FORUM – Time allocated for citizens to bring matters not on the agenda to the attention of the Planning Commission – Time limits may be imposed
6. OLD BUSINESS
7. Commissioners' Questions/Comments
8. City Planner's Report
 - a) GTS Training – See attachments
 - b) Upper Midwest Planning Conference – September 28-30 in St. Cloud
9. Adjourn to Workshop in 2nd Floor Conference Room to Discuss Vacation Rentals By Owner

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

PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, July 20, 2016

City Planner Ostgarden 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 Parks, Plantenberg, Straw, Headley, Turner and Pritschet. Also present were City Planner Ostgarden, Planning Intern Hermerding, and 10 others.

#2 Approval/Amendment of Agenda

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PARKS AND PRITSCHET, DULY CARRIED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

#3 Approve Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on June 15, 2016 and the Special Meeting held on June 29, 2016, as Distributed

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PARKS AND PRITSCHET, DULY CARRIED, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JUNE 15, 2016 AND THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON JUNE 29, 2016, AS DISTRIBUTED.

#4 NEW BUSINESS

- a) Public Hearing – City of Brainerd - for the Rezoning of property located south of Quince Street on S. 6th Street and S. 7th Street to just south of Willow Street from a B-4 (General Commercial) District to a B-2 Neighborhood Business) District and R-2 (One and Two Family Residential) District**

City Planner Ostgarden reported that the proposed amendment dates back to even before the zoning ordinance amendment to change the B-2 zoning language to allow residential land uses. He presented the public hearing notice and maps and discussed existing structures and future land use. He stated that he'd received many phone calls from those who received the information; most inquiring about what the change would mean for them.

The Public Hearing was opened at 6:14pm.

The Chair recognized Ms. Sara Hayden-Shaw, 521 N 9th St and co-owner of 810 S 6th St, Brainerd, who stated that she is very much in favor of the rezoning. She stated that the removal of the non-conforming status is extremely important to allow her neighbors to rebuild, maintain and remodel their properties.

The Public Hearing was closed at 6:15pm.

The following findings-of-fact were read into the record:

1. The rezoning area is generally an area south of Quince to just south of Willow Street and between S. 6th St and S. 7th St.

2. The area proposed for rezoning is an area with businesses and residential land uses.
3. The B-2 District has been amended to included residential uses as permitted uses.
4. The B-4 District makes residential uses non-conforming uses and rezoning to B-2 will eliminate the nonconforming status.
5. B-2 zoning permits commercial uses in buildings up to 5,000 sq. ft. and also permits residential uses.
6. The S. 6th Street corridor is one with an uncertain development future which makes land use and zoning decisions difficult.
7. Rezoning the S. 7th Street frontage to R-2 will affect how development along S. 6th Street will occur.
8. The rezoning is supported by the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Strategies:

LAND USE GOAL #3: *Plan for the orderly, efficient and fiscally responsible growth of residential development in Brainerd.*

Strategies

Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly and compact manner so that new developments can be effectively served by public improvements and that the character and quality of the city's existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced.

Encourage development of low-density and high-density family housing units in those areas designated on the adopted Land Use Plan.

Encourage compatible infill residential development throughout the developed portions of the city, to encourage the efficient use of land, the establishment of a strong tax base and the cost effective provision of city services.

Support the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned sites within the urban core.

LAND USE GOAL #2: *Plan for the orderly, efficient and fiscally responsible growth of commercial and industrial development in Brainerd.*

Encourage the development of additional commercial and industrial areas within the city in accordance with the land use plan.

LAND USE GOAL #5: *Support development that enhances community character and identity.*

Strategy

Work to strengthen and maintain the appearance of the Business Highway 371, Highway 210/Washington Street, Oak Street (former Highway 18), Highway 25 and County Road 3 corridors through design standards, trails, lighting, sidewalks, signage and other tools.
9. One resident spoke in favor of the change.

10. City Planner received several calls relating to the nature of the change; answers satisfied their concerns.

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS STRAW AND PRITSCHET, DULY CARRIED, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE REZONING OF PROPERTY LOCATED SOUTH OF QUINCE STREET ON S. 6TH STREET AND S. 7TH STREET TO JUST SOUTH OF WILLOW STREET FROM A B-4 (GENERAL COMMERCIAL) DISTRICT TO A B-2 NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS) DISTRICT AND R-2 ONE AND TWO FAMILY RESIDENTIAL) DISTRICT.

Commissioners discussed the advantages of this rezone, including flexibility for residents, the reduction of spot zoning, and the creation of a more vital organic community with the option for more home-based businesses.

b) Public Hearing - KRRC LLP 521 Charles Street, Ste. 210, Brainerd, MN 56401- for the Rezoning of the property at 310 W Laurel Street, Brainerd, MN 56401 from a B-2 (Neighborhood Business) District to a B-4 (General Commercial) District

City Planner Ostgarden reported that the property has been an automotive repair business for approximately 7 years and the company wishes to expand to include a U-Haul rental outlet. He discussed the location and surrounding areas, stating that the property has Mississippi River frontage subjecting it to Shoreland Regulations. He stated that the land use plan for this area has not been updated since 2004 and asked the Commission to consider if the ability for additional activity that comes with B-4 help with redevelopment as referenced in the staff report as a "Land Use Goal."

Following Commission inquiries, City Planner Ostgarden confirmed that the petitioner is not requesting to expand or build at the site; the request will involve the storage of U-Haul trailers.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing at 6:32pm.

The Chair recognized Mr. Greg Schmidt, 11573 River Vista Drive, Baxter, co-owner of the automotive repair business at 310 W. Laurel Street. He stated that the parking lot was expanded and improved recently and that the rezoning would allow for further traffic and business to the area as there is no U-Haul rental location within the City of Brainerd.

The Chair recognized Mr. Bill Simon, 9671 Leisure Lane, Brainerd, owner of the four-plex across from the petitioner's shop. He stated that his only concern is noise based on the complaint of one of his tenants.

The Chair closed the Public Hearing at 6:37pm.

The following Findings-of-Fact were read into the record:

1. Property is approximately 2.34 acres and partially developed.
2. The property is adjacent to the Mississippi River and subject to shoreland regulations that will limit the amount of development on the property.
3. There is vacant land to the north, office use to the west and multifamily development to the south.

4. The Future Land Used Map has not been updated and identifies the property as future Public/Semi Public land use.
5. Laurel Street is designed to accommodate traffic associated with a B-4 District.
6. The property has been used for automotive repair for about 7 years.
7. The rezoning is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Land Use goals and Strategies:
8. **LAND USE GOAL #5: *Support development that enhances community character and identity.***
Support the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned sites within the urban core.
9. Petitioner spoke in favor.
10. One person expressed a concern with noise.

Commissioner Parks asked how this request is not “spot zoning.” He stated that his inquiry is based on the denial of the rezoning request at 814 Front Street which the Commission denied based specifically on not desiring to “spot zone.”

Discussion was held relating to noise levels/emissions in a B-4 as compared to a B-2 based on the residential area directly across the street. City Planner Ostgarden stated that there were conditions attached to the original opening of Paradigm Performance based on those concerns and that if the zoning change to B-4 is approved those conditions would no longer apply. He added that noise requirements for the City in general would still apply to encourage neighborhood compatibility; however, the City does not know about these issues unless they are reported.

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PRITSCHET AND STRAW, DULY CARRIED, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE REQUEST FROM KRRC LLP 521 CHARLES STREET, STE. 210, BRAINERD, MN 56401- FOR THE REZONING OF THE PROPERTY AT 310 W LAUREL STREET, BRAINERD, MN 56401 FROM A B-2 (NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS) DISTRICT TO A B-4 (GENERAL COMMERCIAL) DISTRICT.

c) Public Hearing - Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Amend Zoning Ordinance Section 22 – Off Street Parking – to Remove Minimum Off Street Parking

City Planner Ostgarden that from the Planning Department’s perspective he recommends to not include the residential uses or rural agricultural areas in off street parking minimum requirement removals at this time; rather, to look mostly at the business uses and industrial districts. He stated that a meeting of representatives of the business and realty industries was recently held with the outcome being positive and even, “the sooner the better” response and that similar changes are happening in many other communities. He advised the Commission to carefully consider how any changes will affect future businesses, stating no off-street parking at a business would be concerning to him.

The Chair opened the Public Hearing at 6:58pm.

The Chair recognized Ms. Sara Hayden-Shaw, 521 N 9th St, Brainerd, who spoke in favor of this concept moving forward, stating that it will make Brainerd more open to investment based on businesses having some parking available without having to add the immediate expense of creating their own parking areas. She encouraged the Commission to include all of the business zones. She also recommended having a “retro-active” option.

Commission discussion was held relating to the many variations that need to be considered relating to the numerous zones within the community.

MOTIONED AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONERS PRITSCHET AND PARKS, DULY CARRIED, TO REMOVE THE PARKING RESTRICTIONS FOR I-2, I-1, B-4, B-6 AND B-5.

It was determined that the Commission would wait for Council action before addressing parking restrictions for other zones.

d) Vacation Residence By Owner (VRBO) Discussion

City Planner Ostgarden explained that there may be VRBOs operating in Brainerd; however, this is not a use that is permitted according to the Zoning Ordinance. He stated that the practice involves a property owner renting out their own home to visitors for a short amount of time as a vacation rather than using a hotel or resort or bed and breakfast. He asked the Planning Commission to consider whether they would like to permit this use, and distributed language adopted by Aitkin County on the subject. He recommended that the City consider requiring inspections of the units as well as a license.

Pros and Cons of allowing VRBOs were discussed by the Commission. Other items considered were having a limit on how many rentals one could own, registration to track complaints, amount of days staying determining hotel vs. timeshare and department of health requirements.

Commission requested further information be provided in order to hold further discussion at the next Planning Commission meeting.

e) Temporary Family Healthcare Dwellings

City Planner Ostgarden added this item which was presented to the City Council at their July 18, 2016 meeting. The first reading of Ordinance No. 1458 was read opting out of the requirements for temporary family healthcare dwellings.

He explained that "Temporary Family Healthcare Dwellings" are a new type of dwelling that supersedes zoning ordinance requirements wherein a property owner can place a temporary dwelling on their property to house someone that is providing healthcare services to that property owner. He stated that per Legislature, cities that wish to opt out of having this option available can opt out via city ordinance by September 1, 2016.

Following discussion, Commission agreed that the ordinance should proceed to final reading and adoption.

#5 PUBLIC FORUM

None.

#6 OLD BUSINESS

None.

#7 **Commissioners' Questions/Comments**

Commissioner Pritschet discussed Pokémon Go, stating that businesses should consider embracing this new app to bring people in to their shops, etc.

#8 **City Planner's Report**

None.

#9 **Adjourn**

As there was no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Ostgarden AICP
City Planner

MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mark Ostgarden, City Planner 

CC: Jennifer Bergman, Executive Director Crow Wing County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (CWCHRA)

DATE: August 11, 2016

RE: Review of the Crow Wing County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (CWC HRA) Redevelopment Plan

The CWC HRA has accepted an offer to purchase Brainerd Oaks, Serene Pines and Dal Mar Estates subdivisions. Part of this process included a decision by the City Council about waiving assessments for the subdivisions which it did at its August 1, 2016 meeting. The CWC HRA is required create a Redevelopment Plan, the purpose of which is to layout the plan of what the CWC HRA intends to do in order to redevelopment these subdivisions.

By Statute, the CWC HRA is required to apply to the governing body of the city in which the project is located. Before approving the redevelopment plan, the City must hold a public hearing (see SS 469.027 and 469.028). In addition, the CWC HRA must submit the plan to the planning agency for its study and request a written opinion of the planning agency prior to approving the plan.

The CWC HRA will be considering the Redevelopment Plan at its August 16th meeting. If authorized, the CWC HRA staff will forward the plan to the City of Brainerd. It will then ask the City Council to hold a public hearing at its September 6th meeting.

The soonest the Redevelopment Plan could be presented to the CWC HRA is August 16th. The Plan was not drafted until the CWC HRA knew if the City Council would be willing to waive and not recertify the assessments.

Jennifer Bergman, Executive Director of the CWC HRA will be at the August 17th meeting to review the Plan with the Planning Commission. Should the Planning Commission support the plan, a motion recommending approval would be needed.

MEMO

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Mark Ostgarden, City Planner 

DATE: August 11, 2016

RE: Vacation Rentals By Owner (VRBOs) Zoning Ordinance Language

Attached is draft Zoning Ordinance language for VRBOs. The draft is based upon language in the Aikin County Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Department contacted:

- Wilmar
- Hutchison
- Alexandria
- Bemidji
- Stillwater

Wilmar, Hutchinson and Alexandria do not address VRBO's.

Bemidji has zoning language that reads:

Vacation rentals are an interim use in all residential zoning districts and shall meet the following requirements:

1. A site plan showing location of home, garage and provision for guest parking is to be provided.
2. At least one parking space per guest room is to be established or at least one space per 3 maximum sleeping spaces, whichever is greater.
3. One three (3) square foot informational sign is allowed.
4. No exterior alterations or expansions shall be made to the residential structure other than those necessary to meet health and safety codes.
5. All recreational equipment (canoes, boats, and other types of equipment), will be stored inside an approved and permitted accessory structure).

Stillwater allows for overnight lodging (i.e. VRBO) in its commercial district by Special Use Permit as well as in the higher density multiple family districts (though no use permits exist for properties in these districts). It does not allow for them in its single family residential districts. It is in the process of soliciting for outside planning assistance to help guide the City through determining whether overnight lodging should/could be allowed in the single family residential districts as well as the development of appropriate regulations for these types of uses.

Should VRBOs be added to the Zoning Ordinance we may want to review the Zoning Ordinance Bed and Breakfast language. A copy of that language is attached.

I contacted the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) about its role in VRBOs. MDH considers a VRBO a hotel and requires a license should it be rented for less than 7 days

I have reviewed the VRBO language with Building Official Tim Caughey who is attending a Building Officials meeting on August 12th, and plans to inquire if other cities may have addressed this issue. You will note that the draft requires the VRBO to be a licensed rental which will require a licensing process. If VRBOs are permitted it is recommended that an annual registration fee and inspection be required.

I have communicated with Chairman Plantenberg and she has agreed to discussion about VRBOs in a work session.

Vacation Rental by Owner

The following standards apply to Vacation Rental by Owner (VRBO) rented for 7 days or more.

1. The owner of a VRBO must apply for and receive an Interim Use Permit. The initial Interim Use Permit will be valid for ____ years in order to determine the compliance level of the owner with the conditions of approval. Subsequent renewals shall be for ____ years or less. The City will establish fees for the application and renewal.
2. The application for an Interim Use Permit shall include:
 - a. All information required for a conditional use permit
 - b. Floor plan of the structure, including the number of bedrooms with dimensions and all other sleeping accommodations
 - c. A to-scale site plan which shows locations and dimensions of property lines, the dwelling intended for licensing, accessory structures, parking areas and shore recreational facilities.
 - d. Plan for garbage disposal.
 - e. A pet policy.
3. Emergency contact information (police, fire, hospital) be posted in the VRBO.
4. The occupancy of a VRBO shall be limited to no more than two (2) persons per bedroom.
5. Rooms used for sleeping shall be provided with egress windows and smoke detectors in locations that comply with the Minnesota State Building Code or the requirements of the Building Department, whichever is stricter. Every room occupied for sleeping purposes by one person shall contain at least 70 square feet of usable floor space, and every room occupied for sleeping purposes by more than one person shall contain not less than 60 square feet of usable floor space for each occupant thereof.
6. The VRBO shall be connected to city sewer and water.
7. A VRBO shall have a full bathroom (sink, toilet and tub or shower).
8. On-site parking shall be provided which is sufficient to accommodate the occupants of the vacation/private home rental. Public streets may not be used for calculating parking by renters or guests. Parking areas must be setback a minimum distance of ____ feet from the property lines.
9. Attempting to obtain additional occupancy by use of recreational vehicles, tents, accessory structures or fish houses is not permitted.
10. On premise advertising signs are not permitted.
11. The owner shall provide a visual demarcation of the property lines.
12. The owner shall keep a report, detailing use of the home by recording the full name, address, phone number and vehicle license number of guests using the property. A copy of the report shall be provided to the Planning Department upon request.
13. No more than 1 VRBO will be allowed on a lot or parcel and there shall be no more than 1 VRBO per block (300' excluding street rights of way) and 1 per block front (300' excluding street rights of way).

14. A VRBO shall be a licensed rental unit by the City and shall meet the requirements of all statutes, rules, regulations, and ordinances including, but not limited to the City of Brainerd's Rental Housing Maintenance Code.
15. The Planning Commission may impose conditions that will reduce the impacts of the proposed use on neighboring properties, public services, and nearby water bodies as well as other concerns including, but not limited to public safety and safety of guests. Said conditions may include but not be limited to – fencing or vegetative screening, native buffer along the shoreline, noise standards, duration of permit, restrictions as to the docking of watercraft, and number of guests.
16. VRBOs rented for less than 7 days are considered a hotel and are required to have a Minnesota Department of Health license and an Interim Use Permit.
17. All vacation/private home rentals, operating prior to the effective date of these standards, shall be in compliance with this section by _____.

Each unit will require a \$___ initial fee plus \$___ per year for annual licensure pending annual inspection.

SECTION 31 BED AND BREAKFASTS

Section:

- 515-31-1: Purpose and Intent
515-31-2: Conditional Use

515-31-1: Purpose and Intent. The City Council recognizes that bed and breakfasts are an asset to the community and help the preservation of historic homes because the expense of owning and maintaining historic homes has made them less suitable for single family dwellings. Conversion of historic houses into multifamily uses is usually determined by the neighborhood where it is located. It is therefore the intention of the City to limit bed and breakfast uses to those homes where the use would benefit the surrounding area by allowing appropriate adaptive reuse of historic dwellings.

515-31-2: Conditional Use. Bed and breakfasts are allowed by a Conditional Use Permit in the R-R, R-E, R-1, R-2 and R-3 zoning districts as regulated in this Section, subject to the following conditions:

- A. At least two (2) off-street parking spaces must be provided on site for the owner and one (1) parking space for each room of a bed and breakfast unit. The parking spaces must be signed and the parking plan approved by City staff.
- B. The dining facilities must not be open to the public and must be used exclusively by the registered guests unless allowed as a separate permitted or conditional use.
- C. Bed and breakfast uses in residential areas must be located at six hundred (600) feet apart (approximately two (2) blocks).
- D. An identification sign not exceeding twelve (12) square feet may be located on the site. The sign must match the architectural features of the structure.
- E. The maximum of six (6) bed and breakfast guestrooms may be established in a structure. The following lot and structure size criteria determine the number of guestrooms allowed:

Maximum Number Guestrooms Permitted	Original Number of Bedrooms	Maximum Gross House Size Not Including Basement in Square Feet	Minimum Zoning Lot Size in Square Feet
1	2	Up to 2,499	7,500
2	3	2,500 – 2,999	10,000
3	4	3,000 – 3,499	10,000
4	5	3,500 – 4,999	15,000
5	6	5,000 up	20,000
6	7	5,000 up	20,000

Maximum gross house size is determined by using the total square footage of habitable living space within the structure. The number of original bedrooms in the structure will determine the number of guestrooms that will be allowed. This determination will be made by the Brainerd Building Official. In the case of a family with children the family's bedroom use must be determined before the number of permitted guestrooms are determined, and no family member must be displaced for a guestroom.

- G. Adequate lighting must be provided between the structure and parking areas for safety contiguous to residential structure. Exterior lighting shall be provided consistent with the requirements of Section 18 of this Ordinance.

2016 Land Use Training & Education Program



Beyond the Basics of Planning & Zoning: Variances and More!

When and Where:

- **Thursday, September 1 - St. Paul**, The League of Minnesota Cities
- **Tuesday, September 13 - Owatonna**, Owatonna Public Utilities Building
- **Thursday, September 22 - Little Falls**, The Initiative Foundation
This session is co-presented by the NJPA

Time: All sessions will be held from 9:00am - 4:30pm (Check-in begins at 8:30am)

Fee: \$150 (includes lunch and materials)

AICP CM credits: 5.5



Participants learn how planning and zoning tools are used to deal with a wide variety of development issues influencing a community's built environment. The complexities of variances are a major focus. Presenters cover the what, when, and why (complete with "how-tos" and "how-not-tos") with numerous examples and case studies.

- Quick review: History of planning, comprehensive planning, zoning tools, and public health
- Innovative ways to guide land use and development, from PUDs and performance zoning to design guidelines and "cutting edge" applications
- Sustainability-what it is and how to apply sustainable principles to planning and zoning
- The environmental review process-EAWs, EISs, and AUARDs: tools to expedite careful review of complex projects
- Detailed discussion of zoning tools to handle various development, health, and social issues
- Legal issues more in depth: How to implement the comprehensive plan via zoning and subdivision ordinances? What to require for variances? When to grant conditional uses? When to use interim use permits? How to treat nonconforming uses? When to require easements?
- Case studies-actual urban, suburban and rural situations
- Answers to your questions on community zoning issues

Audience: Those who have a solid general knowledge of the planning process (1-2 years on the council, board or zoning/planning commission).

Register Now

Presenters:

Phil Carlson has consulted on planning issues for over 35 years with the St. Paul firm Stantec (formerly Bonestroo and DSU). He has helped prepare comprehensive plans, neighborhood plans, corridor studies, brownfield redevelopment plans and zoning ordinances for numerous communities in the region, including Burnsville, Blaine, Vadnais Heights, St. Cloud, Alexandria, Baxter, Green Bay, Wisconsin, Minot, North Dakota and Marshalltown, Iowa. He prepared some of the region's first form-based codes, including Burnsville's Heart of the City and West St. Paul's Robert Street corridor. He is frequently called as an expert witness in planning and zoning cases.

Kori Land is a shareholder at LeVander, Gillen & Miller, located in South St. Paul, Minnesota. She is the City Attorney for the cities of West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Cottage Grove and Randolph. Ms. Land is the Chair of her Firm's Municipal Practice Group, a past

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Community members, neighborhood groups and the general public receive a reduced price of \$25 per session. Please contact Dolly Parker at dparker@mngts.org for the code.

Register early to ensure you're able to take advantage of these great discounts. A limited number of space are available at these rates.

president of the Minnesota City Attorneys' Association and a frequent speaker for newly elected officials and land use training seminars.

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2016 Land Use Training & Education Program



Your Role as a Planning Commission Member

When and Where:

- **Thursday, October 20 - St. Paul**, League of Minnesota Cities - St. Croix Room
Time: 6:00pm - 9:00pm (check in begins at 5:30 p.m.)
- **Thursday, November 17 - Little Falls**, Morrison County Government Center
Time: 1:00pm - 4:00pm (check in begins at 12:45 p.m.)

Fee: \$60 (does not include a meal)

AICP CM credits: 3



As a Planning Commission member, you contribute hours of unpaid time to your community. Have you discovered that serving in this capacity is a bit more challenging than anticipated? This workshop will focus on what you need to know to be successful in this important position. You'll learn practical tips that can make the difference between results and regrets. Topics include:

- Keeping the "Big Picture" in mind
- Setting significant (but realistic) Commission goals
- Preparing an annual work program
- Changing non-productive patterns of work
- Forging healthy relationships with elected officials and staff (Plus...what to do if those relationships are unhealthy!)
- Ways to facilitate public participation in the planning process
- Effective tools & techniques (models for planning reports and findings of fact, primer on parliamentary procedure)
- Handling controversial issues

Audience: Those who have a solid general knowledge of the planning process (1-2 years on the council, board or zoning/planning commission).

Register Now

Presenter:

John Shardlow, Principal, Stantec

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Developing Health Oriented Neighborhoods

By Mary Glindinning | Posted: Wednesday, July 6, 2016 8:13 am

Say you're driving through a city you don't know well – or maybe even your hometown – and you discover a new neighborhood.

The shops and restaurants look interesting, the sidewalks are wide, people are out and about, and it looks inviting.

You park the car, get out and wander around. *"I could be happy living here,"* you think.

You probably would be healthy living there, too.

The neighborhoods where people live are part of what determines health outcomes, new research shows.

People long believed that keeping active kept people healthy, but the data wasn't freely available to prove it.

Now, with Fitbits and other devices, activity can be traced and results measured.

"Recently the Centers for Disease Control, universities, and healthcare systems have begun analyzing the information at their disposal and correlating health outcomes with place," said Matthew Lambert, partner at DPZ Architects and Town Planners. "For years, we have made assertions that healthy lifestyles are affected by the physical environment around people. If someone lives in a place that is conducive to walking within meaningful destinations nearby, then they will tend to walk more.... For those living in environments not conducive to walking, they have to make a conscious choice to achieve health goals each day, choices which compete for time in our busy lives. While more devices like Fitbits and smart watches help people keep on the path towards a more active lifestyle, living and working in walkable places makes the active lifestyle a part of everyday life. Newly available data has proved this hypothesis, and driven groups like the CDC to support walkable places," Lambert said.

Sometimes even solutions to complex issues start with a single step, said Lambert, who spoke at a New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Portland, Ore., in February.



Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Beginning in 1999, the local Pittsburgh group Riverlife began working on plans for the redevelopment of Pittsburgh's downtown riverfronts. Today, more than 80 percent of the 13-mile Three Rivers Park loop has been completed. Pittsburgh is also participating with the PeopleForBikes Green Lane Program, developing a number of protected bike lanes throughout the city.

"This is step one of health oriented neighborhoods, to make them physically conducive to walkability. Going beyond the basics, we need to make walkable neighborhoods conducive for people with a broad range of abilities. For instance, some individuals may require places of rest along their walking routes while others may benefit from exercise stations. Parks and playgrounds need to be integrated with housing, retail, and workplace, and structured to promote walking and biking, active time outdoors, and social interaction. Combining these elements with a well-structured built environment creates a health oriented neighborhood," Lambert said.

So benches let people take a break, if they need it. Removing any barriers to access and use is also a hallmark of a healthy environment. Sometimes the solution is simple, such as making sure sidewalks are complete on both sides of the street and crosswalks are safe.

"Things tend to be solved by providing easy access to destinations" by walking or other alternatives to cars, Lambert said.

Promoting walking groups and hiking trails can also lead to better health outcomes, along with open spaces and parks. Hospital campuses can have walking possibilities that connect them to the neighborhood.

Health care is moving from caring for the sick to keeping people well – from sick care to health care. It is moving from in-patient to out-patient care, so hospital's and clinic's roles are changing. Part of that means assessing and addressing health needs of the community.

Giving people the resources to age in place is another need. It helps keep neighborhoods multi-generational, and as many as 90 percent of people hope to stay in their own homes as long as they can. Shuttles to health care services can help.

Affordable housing, public transportation and safety are all necessities.

"A health oriented neighborhood is a place that incorporates a health facility as an anchor that advances health across the entire community," said. Brett Van Akkeren, senior policy analyst for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Health oriented neighborhoods create an environment of total wellness for the residents and employees of the neighborhood. They use a combination of community design and targeted programs to improve health outcomes for everyone."

The EPA is identifying national best practices related to the design and development of health oriented neighborhoods. Applying the principles of smart growth to the siting and design of medical facilities and their surrounding areas can improve health, environment and economic outcomes.

"Our intent is to work with government and non-profit partners to use this knowledge to support communities in their efforts to create neighborhoods that are healthier for people and the natural environment," Van Akkeren said.

So a medical center might occupy a vacancy in a neighborhood strip mall.

The EPA says the concept is evolving. Placing primary care facilities in neighborhoods is relatively common. Having the facility focus on wellness rather

than disease prevention is becoming more common. Integrating wellness into the broader community through facility siting, community design and other strategies is still relatively new.

It is different than an urgent care center within a big box store.

Urgent care focuses on disease control. Health oriented neighborhoods focus on primary care and wellness in the whole neighborhood.

According to the EPA, features of a health oriented neighborhood include:

- * **Accessible and affordable healthcare** with a focus on disease prevention and a healthy lifestyle

- * **Healthy eating** with access to fresh, local foods at grocers, farmers markets, or community gardens and training on how to shop for, cook, and eat a healthy diet

- * **Healthy homes** work to reduce indoor exposure to lead, allergens, toxins, radon and carbon monoxide in people's homes, with a priority focus on disadvantaged households.

- * **Protection from environmental health hazards** outdoors, including air and water pollutants, toxins, and contaminated lands.

- * **Physical fitness** opportunities, which can be enhanced by:

Designing communities to include sidewalks, trails and bike lanes to encourage walking and biking.

Supporting vibrant neighborhood centers with a variety of businesses that allow residents to meet most of their daily needs on foot or by bike.

Providing transit services that enable residents to achieve a significant part of prescribed daily physical activity just by walking and biking to and from the bus or rail stop.

Investing in parks, recreation centers, pools, and other facilities that allow for play-based exercise. Communities can also negotiate share use agreements with the local school system so playgrounds can be used when school is not in session.

- * **Psychological well being**, with access to nature and opportunities for both planned and spontaneous social interaction in the community.

Access to nature is shown to reduce depression and anxiety. Providing parks and access to waterfronts and other natural areas can improve mental health outcomes.

Creating informal gathering places outside of home and work, such as cafes, bars, bookstores, etc., provides space for spontaneous social interaction and promotes social well-being.

- * **Economic opportunity** through medical and other health oriented enterprises. Creating a local economy around health and well-being provides jobs in one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy and provides business opportunities for local entrepreneurs. This may include jobs to support local medical facility needs as well as jobs created around local food and wellness.

There are many components to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that support communities' efforts to build health oriented neighborhoods. Some examples provided by the EPA include:

* **Support for medical facilities** - By providing more individuals with insurance, ACA is creating a demand for more primary care facilities.

* **Emphasizing wellness** over disease control means more resources are available for the wellness components of the neighborhood. For example, the ACA requires all hospitals that want to maintain a non-profit status to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and invest in the community to address the health needs that the assessment identifies. This can mean more resources to implement components of a health oriented neighborhood.