

CITY OF ST. ANTHONY
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MAY 17, 2022
7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER.

Chair Socha called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Chair Socha invited the Commission and the audience to join her in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL.

Commissioners Present: Chair Socha, Commissioners Erickson, Hendrickson, and Rude.

Absent: Commissioners Kukendall, Morita, and Gaveske.

Also Present: City Planner Stephen Grittman, Assistant to the City Manager Nicole Miller and Student Liaison Alayna Peterson.

I. APPROVAL OF THE MAY 17, 2022 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA.

The agenda was approved as presented.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 15, 2022, REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES.

Motion by Commissioner Erickson, seconded by Commissioner Rude, to approve the March 15, 2022, Regular Planning Commission Meeting Minutes.

Motion carried 4-0.

III. PUBLIC HEARING – NONE.

IV. STAFF REPORTS

City Planner Grittman provided an update on items recommended by the Commission and adopted by the City Council. He noted that the Council was very complimentary about the work of the Planning Commission and wanted to express that appreciation for the work on the recent ordinances.

V. OTHER BUSINESS.

A. 2022 Pyramid Mission Statement

1 Councilmember Webster provided background information on the goal setting that has
2 occurred in recent years. She thanked the Commission noting that some of the goals related to
3 planning are in addition to the normal workload of the Commission and helps the City address
4 trends and plan for the future. She stated that each of the steps is meant to bring them closer
5 to accomplishing the pyramid mission statement. She welcomed any questions the
6 Commission may have.

7
8 Commissioner Erickson asked for more details on changes that were made. Councilmember
9 Webster noted a boxed area that denotes some of the changes from 2021 to 2022 and
10 highlighted some of those changes and/or additions. She also provided details on the
11 proposed resident survey, noting that a link will be available for residents that are not chosen
12 for the sampling to still complete the survey.

13
14 Chair Socha commented that sometimes the discussions of the Planning Commission go
15 beyond the scope of planning, including economic development. She asked if it would be
16 appropriate for the Commission to also forward comments on other topics in the pyramid
17 outside of planning, as many elements work together, and the Commission members care
18 about more than just planning topics. Councilmember Webster acknowledged the complexity
19 of some of the issues brought before the Planning Commission. She agreed that it is hard to
20 only view something in one lens because issues are intertwined. She welcomed those
21 comments as it helps her to think about unintended consequences and different perspectives.

22
23 Commissioner Hendrickson referenced a new item that mentions comparing greenspace to
24 density in Silver Lake Village and asked for more details. Councilmember Webster
25 referenced the gas station complex at 39th and Stinson Boulevard which the City purchased
26 several years ago. She stated that there has been a proposal to build 38 units with the same
27 floor plan that was already constructed to the south and therefore they are attempting to be
28 mindful of the greenspace that is available. She noted that the highest concentration of
29 children live in apartments, and they do not always have walkable access to greenspace. She
30 stated that they may need to be more intentional about where they plan for greenspace.

31
32 Commissioner Hendrickson agreed that there is a lot of asphalt in that area and there would be
33 a great potential for improvement in that area.

34 **B. R-1 Zoning Amendments Discussion**

35
36
37 City Planner Gritman explained the purpose of this item is to initiate a discussion over the
38 potential for expanding buildable area on single family parcels in St. Anthony. The simple
39 impetus for this discussion is to consider whether there are opportunities to allow for more
40 significant reinvestment in existing housing stock given a changing expectation for single
41 family home design. He noted St. Anthony has demonstrated a strong interest in its single-
42 family neighborhoods for a variety of reasons.

43
44 Chair Socha stated that she did not see anything in the report proposing a change from the 35
45 to 45 percent impervious surface requirements and asked if that is proposed to stay the same.
46 Mr. Gritman stated that the engineer does not recommend changing those numbers but noted

1 that on a case-by-case basis they could review different ways to treat water. He confirmed
2 that a variance could be used, but if that became a common request, he would suggest adding
3 a process into Code.
4

5 Chair Socha commented that if the impervious surface is not changing, she would question
6 whether there would be room for expansion on the lots. Mr. Grittmann commented that it
7 would vary. He recognized that there are properties against that limit now and others close to
8 the threshold. He agreed that building up would be an option and noted that there are some
9 properties that do not have that issue and would have room to expand within the threshold.
10

11 Mr. Grittmann recognized the suburban trend for private properties to have their own
12 greenspace and away from pocket park spaces. He stated that if they consume more of the
13 greenspace on private properties, they would need to be mindful of the overall greenspace
14 system in the community.
15

16 Mr. Grittmann commented that he provided three scenarios in the case that reflect a general
17 summary of single-family lot conditions. He welcomed input from the Commission.
18

19 Chair Socha commented that it was well laid out and she did not have any questions on the
20 scenarios.
21

22 Commissioner Rude stated that he would like to discuss the overall philosophy before they go
23 too far. He noted that the biggest pressure from the Metropolitan Council is related to density
24 and was unsure that this would equate to higher density. He stated that this only seems to lend
25 itself to bigger homes and was unsure that was the direction they wanted to go. Mr. Grittmann
26 stated that many families are already occupying their bedrooms and therefore are using their
27 kitchen table to home office and have expressed that they need additional space to function
28 long-term. He noted that if they cannot add onto their home, the option would be to move to a
29 larger home and therefore this would attempt to provide the opportunity for families to add on
30 to their home and remain in their neighborhood. He recognized that it could change the
31 character of the neighborhood.
32

33 Commissioner Erickson stated that allowing as many changes to a property as feasible would
34 lend itself to a property being more marketable and desirable. He asked the degree of this
35 being an issue in Saint Anthony and whether there are a lot of people that want to expand but
36 cannot because of the setback requirements. Mr. Grittmann replied that he has handled a
37 handful of calls with homeowners expressing that interest, as well as from architects working
38 with residents. He noted that home officing is one reason for the request, but aging residents
39 also want to expand without building up as stairs are an issue for those residents.
40

41 Commissioner Rude referenced the apartments that have setbacks near the streets and believes
42 that takes away from the luxury of the community. He stated that he would not anticipate the
43 single-family home stock changing. He stated that this would allow larger homes at the
44 impact of the neighbors. He stated that the reduced setbacks would impact greenspace and
45 trees and therefore he views this as a difficult trade off. He stated that he does want to
46 encourage building and improving but believes the setback provide the luxury feel of living in

1 a single-family community. He believed that reducing the setbacks to that extent would be
2 the wrong way to go if the intention is to keep the housing stock valuable.

3
4 Chair Socha recalled from previous discussions that the community is a suburb, and they have
5 smaller typical lot sizes than other suburbs. She asked if that is accurate. She noted that if the
6 lot sizes are smaller, there would seem to be a reason to preserve the greenspace that they
7 have. She asked if there are trends in surrounding cities to reduce setbacks to allow for
8 expansion. Mr. Gritman replied that Saint Anthony was developed with 8,000 to 9,000
9 square foot lot size range, which is smaller than some of the other communities which he
10 believed use 10,000 to 11,000 during their main development period. He stated that there are
11 some other communities, such as Saint Louis Park, that have smaller lots of about 6,000
12 square feet. He stated that 10,000 to 12,000 square foot lots become more common as the
13 legacy standard for second ring suburban areas. He commented that there is a trend in moving
14 that backward as developers continue to seek 60-foot lots, 7,000 to 8,000 square feet in size in
15 attempt to provide affordability to buyers. He referenced a recent conversation with a
16 developer proposing a project 25 miles from the metro that stated 65-foot lots are needed to
17 provide affordability and those homes still started at \$450,000. He stated that many
18 communities are beginning to rethink setbacks, and some have considered allowing accessory
19 dwelling units. He noted that the Council has stated that it is not interested in pursuing
20 accessory dwelling units. He commented that many of the communities that developed in the
21 20s and 30s have struggled to find a way to keep their single-family neighborhoods vital,
22 noting that at some time there is a point where the housing stock needs to be updated and
23 invested in to suit the needs of families.

24
25 Commissioner Erickson commented that it seems that Edina, Minneapolis, and Golden Valley
26 have perhaps changed their setbacks as he notices more older homes being torn down and new
27 homes constructed. He commented that his neighborhood was primarily constructed in the
28 60s and the homes are perhaps above the average square footage but are not large. He stated
29 that does not leave many options for younger families with more than two children and
30 therefore believes something should be done. He stated that the issue that would give him the
31 most pause would be the scenario related to the front setback as that would change the
32 character when driving down the street. He noted that he would be interested in obtaining
33 examples where that has been done. Mr. Gritman commented that he is confident that he
34 could find such examples to share. He agreed that there would be a visual impact to that
35 change.

36
37 Chair Socha recalled a requirement related to average setback and asked if that would remain
38 or whether that would be changed as well. Mr. Gritman replied that if the front setback were
39 changed, that requirement would also need to be removed or changed.

40
41 Commissioner Rude commented that if a home would be allowed to expand in the backyard,
42 he would want to see a height restriction to minimize impacts to neighboring properties. He
43 commented that the new generation does not have interest in yard work or gardens and
44 therefore there is a trend to have bigger homes on smaller lots. He was unsure if that would
45 be done through an addition but rather tearing down the home and building a new home on the

1 lot. He stated that has been done in his neighborhood and they look nice and have been great
2 additions.

3
4 Chair Socha stated that she is torn on the proposals as she does have the attitude that she
5 should be able to do what she wants on her property and not be impacted by a restrictive
6 setback. She noted that many times additions come with related improvements such as
7 residing the entire home, with also provides benefit to the neighborhood. She stated that she
8 also does not want Saint Anthony to feel like Minneapolis or Saint Paul. She commented that
9 changing setbacks make it seem more urban than suburban. She noted that she is torn as she
10 pros and cons to each option. She believed that if changes are made, they should not be
11 drastic but also realized that may not accomplish the desired outcome.

12
13 William Risse, 29th Avenue and Silver Lake Road, commented that he has a corner lot and
14 even though they are a younger generation they enjoy gardening and taking care of their yard.
15 He stated that they have been meeting with staff to discuss options for expanding their home,
16 noting that any of the options would require a variance. He stated that their neighbors have
17 five-foot side yard setbacks, but they are required to have a 30-foot setback. He commented
18 that it is not practical to use the side yard and would prefer to place an addition nearer to the
19 road to maintain their usable backyard space. He stated that they would support a 15-foot
20 setback for corner lots.

21
22 Commissioner Hendrickson commented that she is supportive of doing something because she
23 agrees that household needs are changing, and the housing stock does not necessarily reflect
24 people's lifestyles. She stated that they would need to determine which of these changes
25 would add the value people are looking for. She believed that some changes would allow the
26 community to remain marketable and better fit the lives of residents.

27
28 Chair Socha commented that it is not ideal to have people come in to request repeated
29 variances and therefore if something makes sense it would make sense to change the
30 ordinance and remove the costly step of residents having to request a variance. She agreed
31 that it does make sense to do something but was still unsure as to what should be done. She
32 noted that she does want to maintain the feeling of a suburb rather than an urban area. She
33 confirmed the consensus of the Commission to continue discussing this topic. She found it
34 helpful to know that the impervious surface limits would not be changing.

35
36 Commissioner Erickson believed that it would be wise to move slowly on this topic and
37 therefore suggested that it would be helpful to have some of the requested information for
38 comparison and review before suggesting language. He stated that there seems to be some
39 agreement that changing the rear setback would be the most supported.

40
41 Mr. Grittmann appreciated the input and felt that he had sufficient input to move forward and
42 bring information back to the Commission.

43
44 Chair Socha commented that it would also be helpful to have a summary of past requests that
45 have been approved by the Commission through variance. Mr. Grittmann commented that he

1 could collect that information but noted that many times residents call him and do not move
2 forward because of the required setbacks and variance process.

3
4 Commissioner Hendrickson stated that the corner lot scenario would seem to make the most
5 sense.

6
7 Commissioner Erickson stated that he would be interested in knowing whether other
8 communities have altered their setback requirements.

9

10 **VI. COMMUNITY FORUM.**

11

12 No one appeared to address the Planning Commission.

13

14 **VII. INFORMATION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

15

16 No comments.

17

18 **VIII. ADJOURNMENT.**

19

20 Motion by Commissioner Erickson, seconded by Commissioner Rude, to adjourn the meeting
21 at 8:10 p.m.

22

23

24

25

26 Respectfully submitted,

27 Amanda Staple

28 *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

29

Motion carried 4-0.

APPROVED