



PLANNING COMMISSION SYNOPSIS

Thursday, October 28, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Solberg called the Planning Commission meeting to order in the City Council Chambers at 6:00 PM.

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Jon Solberg, Nelly Korman, Joanna Goltzman, Paige Rohman, Aubrey Albrecht, Suado Abdi, Phil Koktan (all in person)

STAFF PRESENT: Glen Markegard, Aarica Coleman, Nick Johnson, Mike Palermo, Shawn James, Liz O'Day (all in person)

Chairperson Solberg led the attendees in the reciting of *The Pledge of Allegiance*.

**ITEM 4
7:17 p.m.**

APPLICANT: City of Bloomington

REQUEST: Discuss potential amendments to Single Family and Two Family Dwelling Standards

HRA COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Cheryl Lewis, Jon Oleson, Victoria Hoogheem, Mark Thorson

DISCUSSION:

Solberg reconvened the Planning Commission reconvened after its recess. HRA Chair Lewis called the concurrent HRA meeting to order and completed a roll call of members. HRA members Lewis, Oleson, Hoogheem and Thorson were present. HRA Commissioner Baloga was absent.

Palermo explained that the City Code standards for Single Family and Two Family Dwelling largely date back to the 1970s. Demographics and market demand have changed significantly since then. The purpose of the discussion tonight is to review potential ways to update the code to improve affordability and operational efficiency.

Guiding questions to be discussed:

- Should staff move forward with a comprehensive evaluation of the potential code amendments?
- If so, should each amendment be prioritized high, medium, or low?
- What are your initial reactions and feedback on potential options?

Minimum Lot Size

Issues: Other communities like Richfield, Burnsville, Edina and St. Louis Park have smaller minimum lot sizes. There are pros and cons of smaller lot sizes. Smaller lots can impact the ability to meet minimum parking, setbacks, and impervious surfaces. However,

about 15% of Bloomington's single family lots are legally non-conforming at under 11,000 square feet. Only about 2% of lots are smaller than 9,000 square feet. Even with a lower lot size, there would be little land for redevelopment. Another issue is the two family minimum of 15,000 square feet is inconsistent with the low density land use guide plan.

Approaches: reducing the lot size, overlay district with flexibility or comprehensive plan amendments.

Discussion: Jon Oleson and Cheryl Lewis encouraged staff to evaluate it further. Oleson also mentioned looking at the age of buildings, especially on the east side.

Suado Abdi stated it is important to note that the smaller lots on the east side will be the most impacted.

Paige Rohman encouraged staff to look at it further and perhaps evaluate maximum lot sizes to limit huge mansions.

Victoria Hoogheem agreed but recommended that lots be equally split for an equity standpoint.

Consensus: The consensus was to evaluate this further.

Two Family Home Front Setback

Issues: The two family home standards has a 50 foot front setback requirement compared to the single family home standard of 30 feet.

Approaches: Reduce setback or retain setback

Consensus: All were in agreement to change the standard.

Two Family Home Approval Process

Issue: Two family homes located within 500 feet of each other are considered a grouping and require a planned development overlay to be approved.

Approaches: reduce or remove the Planning Commission and City Council review of two family dwellings

Discussion: Jon Solberg mentioned some homes near the bluff are more imposing than a cluster of two family homes.

Paige Rohman mentioned two garage stalls per unit is large and should be evaluated.

Consensus: They were in agreement that the PC and CC approval process for groupings of two family home should be removed. Additional standards should be evaluated need to address adverse impacts.

Minimum Home Size

Issue: Having a minimum home size creates a minimum cost for new construction.

Approaches: Reduce or remove size requirements

Discussion: Paige Rohman stated this is a 1970 type standard. People are not utilizing the basements as much as now.

Jon Solberg stated for some people, 400 square feet is efficient. Decreasing the size opens housing opportunity.

Joanna Goltzman mentioned the average house size is getting smaller so it makes sense to allow smaller houses.

Jon Oleson mentioned that we should encourage increasing the height.

Suado Abdi asked if there are design guidelines for two family dwellings. Palermo stated to some degree, there are design guidelines for two family homes.

Consensus: They all agreed to look into it further.

Minimum Parking Requirements

Issue: Minimum parking requirement of 4 spaces, two of which are enclosed sets adds cost to new construction.

Approaches: Remove or reduce minimum parking requirements

Discussion: Mark Thorson stated he supports flexibility and considering single car garages. Suado Abdi asked if a tandem garage is considered two-stalls. If the minimum lot size is reduced, it only makes sense to have reduced parking requirements. Palermo stated the Code does not prohibit tandem garages.

Aubrey Albrecht stated it is important to consider this standard especially with multi-generational housing. People still drive cars. Parking on-street should be allowed.

Joanna Goltzman stated on-street parking will impact street sweeping and garbage. If we reduce parking requirements, does it increase the need for off-site storage and clutter?

Phil Koktan stated he is in favor of a reduction rather than removal. On-street parking in Minneapolis is not favorable. He was not ready to remove it totally as it will have a dramatic feel on the neighborhoods.

Mark Thorson stated residential streets are so wide and no one parks on them.

Aubrey Albrecht stated the difference is Minneapolis has sidewalks and would not want to walk on the street if there are cars parked on both sides.

Paige Rohman stated the City keeps rebuilding the streets and no sidewalks are added.

Consensus: They all agreed looking further at reducing parking requirements.

Cluster Development

Issue: The code does not permit cluster or cottage development. Palermo walked through some examples from other cities of projects with multiple small, permanent homes, which occupy one or two single family home parcels. This cluster development would be higher in density but could address the “missing middle” of affordable housing.

Discussion: Suado Abdi asked if cluster development would be permitted in R-1. Palermo stated it does not meet the current standards today. But moving forward, there could be an overlay district and performance standards to ensure new requirements are met.

Jon Solberg stated there is a market for small affordable units.

Victoria Hoogheem said locating this close to transit is worth exploring.

Jon Oleson mentioned a developer previously approached the City Council about redeveloping the mobile home park into a cluster development. It is important to consult with the market.

Mark Thorson said cluster development can work as long as there are shared amenities such as laundry, shared community space, etc.

Phil Koktan asked about outreach so far. Palermo mentioned this is in its initial stage. They intend to talk to the community and developers. Koktan mentioned to tread lightly with cluster development. The neighborhoods will change dramatically if cluster development is permitted. There are other zones for denser development. Aarica Coleman said they are hearing from the homelessness and BIPOC communities that this is needed. They are reviewing these with an equity and affordability lens.

Mark Thorson said the City needs to provide more housing options.

Aubrey Albrecht stated the City can start smaller first, perhaps five houses on two lots.

Consensus: Evaluate this further with outreach to developers and the community.

ITEM 2
7:28 p.m.

APPLICANT:	City of Bloomington
LOCATION:	Citywide
REQUEST:	Single and Two-Family Dwelling Standards (study item)

HRA COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Vicki Hoogheem, Cheryl Lewis, Mark Thorson, Nathan Coulter

DISCUSSION:

Palermo provided the background and goals of reviewing the single and two-family dwelling standards.

Minimum Lot Size and Median Lot Width*Approaches:*

Option 1: Minimum lot width of 50 feet and Minimum Lot size of 6,500 SF

Considerations: Many lots are 100 feet wide, compact design, impervious surface could be limiting, requires comprehensive plan amendment

Option 2: Minimum lot width of 60 feet and Minimum Lot size of 7,800 SF

Considerations: Some lots are 120 feet wide, increases financial viability, compact design, impervious surface could be limiting, require comprehensive plan amendment

Option 3: Minimum lot width of 70 feet and Minimum Lot size of 8,750 SF

Considerations: Less opportunity for redevelopment, bring non-conforming lots into conformance, would not require comprehensive plan amendment

Discussion: Rohman asked about irregularly shaped lots. Palermo stated the lot width must be met at the setback point. Rohman was not opposed to a smaller width, however, he cautioned against reducing the width drastically from the existing standard.

Thorson supported 50 or 60 foot widths in order to maximize development. He asked if staff considered 40 feet wide. Palermo stated Bloomington does not have alleys so 40 foot widths would get incredibly tight to accommodate structures and driveways. The Code limits 35% impervious surface coverage to accommodate stormwater infiltration. The City cannot increase the impervious surface allowance without overhauling its entire storm sewer system.

Solberg stated 60 foot width seems to be a good compromise. Reducing the width down to 50 might be too drastic and might cause an uproar from the public. Palermo mentioned it can be reduced further if staff finds that it isn't making an impact.

Coulter said 50 feet makes sense considering the amount of lots that are 100 feet wide. The biggest issue is impervious surface. He suggested starting with 60 foot widths and re-evaluate it again in a few years when there is more data.

Koktan asked about public outreach. Palermo stated staff has not conducted public outreach yet. He wanted to gather the Planning Commission and HRA Board's input before engaging the public. Koktan asked if there will be any public involvement in crafting the language. Palermo stated the plan is to engage the public however, it will likely be more digital outreach because of the pandemic. Staff will find ways to help

public conceptualize the potential changes. The amount of potential development that may occur will be an important aspect to engage the public.

Abdi said these changes will have the most impact in the low-income neighborhoods. She stressed the importance of equitable lot divisions. How does the City ensure that the impact will not occur in communities that are more susceptible? Palermo mentioned the age of housing stock in eastern portions of Bloomington lends itself to more redevelopment than western part of Bloomington. One way to reduce the redevelopment potential would be a larger lot size and width closer to existing conditions.

Hoogheem agreed with Commissioner Abdi's concern. Perhaps the City needs to start at 70 feet in order to protect eastern Bloomington. It's important to not be too aggressive.

Goltzman stated a large lot could mean huge homes that don't meet the character of the neighborhood. She recommended 60 feet because it is a middle ground, and it also doesn't have the space to accommodate a huge structure.

Solberg stated the private market can't be controlled but perhaps this is where the HRA can help to increase the standard.

Rohman said on the flip side, a developer could buy smaller lots to make one huge lot. Should that be restricted? Should there be a maximum lot size? Solberg agreed.

Abdi asked if a setback is not being met in a lot of subdivision application, then it should not be accepted. How would the City approach sites that might need a variance for setback? Palermo stated the plat would not be approved because it creates a non-conformity.

Thorson said it's best to revisit the goals of making the change. Is it to create or accommodate more housing stock? Or is it to prevent undesirable development that is denser? It's best to be creative.

Consensus:

Commissioners were generally supportive of each option however, Option 2 with a 60 foot lot width and 7,800 SF minimum lot size was the preferred approach.

Corner Lot Minimum Lot Size

Approach: Add to minimum corner lot size by 3,250 SF relative to internal lots rather than 4,000 SF

Palermo explained that the current approach considers that a corner lot has two front yards. The second front yard requires a 30 foot setback requiring an additional 4,000 SF. However, in reality all lots require a 5 foot side setback. Removing that from the equation results in additional need of only 3,250 SF.

Discussion: Rohman asked if there was consideration smaller than 25 foot setback. There wasn't a strong reason.

Koktan said he is not providing much feedback because he has never lived in a single family dwelling in Bloomington and is waiting until there is public feedback.

Consensus: All were supportive of utilizing an additional 3,250 SF for corner lots relative to internal lots rather than 4,000 SF for corner lot.

Two-Family Minimum Lot Size

Approach: Take total of two single family lots minus the side yard setback requirement. No one raised any issue to this approach.

Two Family Home Grouping Approval Process

Approaches:

Option 1: Change level of review from the City Council to the Planning Commission through a CUP

Option 2: Change to administrative final site and building plans

Discussion: Goltzman argued that Planning Commission provides a public hearing so the public can get involved and provide testimony.

Rohman stated there is a strong tendency for people to oppose a two-family home. He would recommend getting feedback from the public first and then he'd be more in favor of Option 2 if the public is ok with that option.

Solberg agreed. However, if it meets all the Code requirements, then what's the point. He was mostly in favor with Option 2.

Consensus: Gather public input first and then make a determination on the approach.

Cluster Development

Approaches:

Palermo explained Cluster Developments in this context are similar to manufactured home parks but at a smaller scale. The land in a manufactured home park has a common owner where the resident may own the home or be renter. The difference is in a Cluster home the buildings are permanent with a foundation and this often is seen on properties smaller than Bloomington's 5 acre requirement. Minneapolis recently adopted standards for Intentional Cluster Development. While there are some changes that the City of Bloomington should consider, Minneapolis's standards are a good starting point. Some standards staff is in support of include allowing the use in R-1 with a CUP, must meet site and setback requirements, not more than 2 dwelling units in each principal structure, and must submit floor plans.

Discussion: Koktan asked if these would be owner occupied or rental. Palermo said there are different models. Koktan questioned the difference between apartments versus cluster. Palermo stated there are advantages of cluster development including density, number of units.

Lewis stated is this similar to homeless veteran housing? Palermo stated a lot of cluster development examples are homeless veteran housing.

Additional Approaches:

Minimum Lot Size for Cluster Development

Option 1: Utilize minimum lot size standard

Option 2: require a larger lot size

Solberg said it is difficult to make a determination when the standards are unknown.

Hoogheem stated it depends on how many units are part of this. She has seen this in other communities and it has worked. It integrates community.

Most agreed to establish a maximum number of residential units for a cluster development.

Minimum Parking Requirements for Cluster Development

Solberg mentioned it depends on how close it is to transit. Also, there is a ton of space on streets, perhaps there is a way to not require off-street parking.

Consensus: There was a lot of discussion, however, until there is more information potential operation and public input, commissioners did not have strong opinions one way or another.

Minimum Parking Requirements

Approaches:

Palermo explained this is one item that was previously discussed that did not have strong consensus. While removing or reducing the garage requirement may reduce development cost it may impact total off street parking and storage.

Option 1: Reduce to 1 car

Option 2: Reduce 2 car but provide for future expansion

Option 3: Reduce to 1.5 car

Option 4: No change

Discussion: Solberg suggested the proof of garage option for the future. A garage is a convenience and can add up to the total impervious surface coverage.

Hoogheem and Thorson supported a one car garage minimum.

Consensus: The consensus was mixed with some leading toward reducing the requirement to 1 car.

Prevailing setback

Approaches:

Palermo explained how the Prevailing setback is applied to properties abutting properties developed before 1974. It can sometimes result in a larger than setback than the minimum 30 foot standard.

Option 1: Apply current standard Citywide regardless of the 1974 standard

Option 2: Apply prevailing when there are several lots exceeding the minimum

Option 3: Remove prevailing and utilize one standard (3 feet)

Option 4: No change

Consensus: Three voted to remove prevailing and utilize one standard and the remaining commissioners and board members did not have an opposing opinion.

Minimum home size

Approaches:

Palermo explained that the minimum home standard for single family detached homes is 1,040 SF. This was recently amended to include finished basements. The Planning Commission and HRA Board did not have strong opinions at the previous meeting.

Option 1: Reduce the size

Option 2: No change

Discussion: Thorson suggested to reduce it. There are costs involved with every square foot. Family size is becoming smaller and house design is becoming more flexible and open.

Rohman questioned if a minimum is necessary.

Solberg stated if cluster development is allowable, then is a minimum required.

Consensus: Four Commissioners were in favor of reducing the minimum with none in opposition.

- License – American Rare Coin & Collectibles** Motion by Martin, seconded by Coulter for the approval of the precious metal dealer license for Liberty Acquisition LLC, doing business as, American Rare Coin & Collectibles. Motion carried 7-0.
- 7.2 Public Hearing: New Therapeutic Massage Enterprise License – Modern Athlete Massage** Mayor Busse opened the public hearing. No one spoke.
Motion by Coulter, seconded by Martin to close the public hearing.
Motion carried 7-0.
Motion by Coulter, seconded by Dallessandro, for the approval of the therapeutic massage enterprise license for Modern Athlete Massage LLC, doing business as, Modern Athlete Massage, 8120 Penn Avenue South, Suite 500N, Bloomington, MN 55431. Motion carried 7-0.
- 8. ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS**
- 8.1 Board and Commission Policy and Process Improvement Update** Community Engagement Coordinator Emily Larson presented an update. Coulter noted that this was a vast improvement over the previous process for board and commission applications.
- 8.2 Advisory Board of Health Appointments** Motion by Coulter, seconded by Lowman to appoint Kelsey Ford to the Advisory Board of Health as a provider member with term from March 1, 2022, to February 28, 2025, and to appoint Andrea Puckett to the Advisory Board of Health as a consumer member with a term from March 1, 2022, to February 28, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.
- 8.3 Creative Placemaking Commission Appointments** Motion by Carter, seconded by Martin to appoint Beth McCoy and Logan Sauer to the Creative Placemaking Commission with terms from March 1, 2022, to February 28, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.
- 8.4 Human Rights Commission Appointments** Motion by Dallessandro, seconded by Coulter to appoint Stephanie Wiersma and Shelby Zomermaand to the Human Rights Commission with terms from March 1, 2022, to February 28, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.
- 8.5 Parks, Arts and Recreation Commission Appointments** Motion by Coulter, seconded by Martin to appoint Darrell Eager and Chris Fleck to the Parks, Arts and Recreation Commission with terms from March 1, 2022, to February 28, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.
- 8.6 Sustainability Commission Appointments** Motion by Dallessandro, seconded by Carter to appoint Angela Begosh, Andy Scott, and Beth Stegora to the Sustainability Commission with terms from March 1, 2022, to February 28, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.
- 8.7 Single- and Two-Family Home Standards and Accessory Dwelling Units Update** Planner Mike Palermo presented, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Palermo covered single family lot width and area. Councilmembers inquired how many lots throughout the city are 100' and 120'. Nelson stated support of allowing smaller lots to provide flexibility for residents. Responding to Carter on RS-1 zoning, Palermo stated those were not included in the study as they make up such a small proportion of the lots in the city. Carter asked to consider standardizing residential zoning across the city, consolidating RS-1 and R-1 zoning districts.

Lowman inquired if there were any concerns from a public safety standpoint, fire protection access. Palermo responded there were no concerns, and that if these changes were made, the result [in terms of lot sizes permitted] would be similar to neighborhoods in Richfield today.

Dallessandro inquired on open lots along 35W frontage roads. Markegard noted a possibility that six of those can be returned by MnDOT for housing development.

Nelson in R-1 zoning, are there rules regarding garage sizes, exterior finishes?

Mayor Busse requested data and maps on how many and where larger lots are located throughout the city before making any decisions.

Using an interactive polling tool, staff polled the Council on preferences for minimum lot widths. Result: 2 votes for 50', 4 votes for 60', 1 vote for 70'.

Palermo continued, discussing corner lot setbacks and residential parking requirements.

Nelson noted many houses in Bloomington have a single-car garage. If we reduce the requirement, could look at storage space requirements as many people use garage space for storage rather than for cars.

Polling result: 3 votes for no minimum garage requirement, 1 vote for 1 car min.

Palermo discussed the "prevailing front setback" requirement.

Polling result: Unanimous vote for "Remove the prevailing front setback requirement and utilize one standard (currently 30 feet)".

Nelson inquired if there was any discussion of changing the 30-foot minimum front setback requirement. Palermo responded that there was not, as that setback is pretty ingrained in the community.

Palermo discussed the approval process for two-family homes.

Responding to Dallessandro's inquiry on the last time a new two-family home was built in Bloomington, Markegard noted that we see one or two per year. As one-off developments, they wouldn't come before City Council for approval.

Polling result: 4 votes for change to administrative approval through final site and building plans; 1 vote for change to CUP approved by Planning Commission.

Martin noted that two-family homes are an asset to the community, filling a critical "missing middle" in housing, and suggested the approval process should be as streamlined as the approval process for single-family homes.

Palermo discussed minimum home size, noting the current minimum requirement of 1,040 square feet of finished area.

Polling results: 6 votes to remove the minimum size from the zoning code.

Planner Shawn James presented on Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) standards, noting the structure types that are / are not currently allowed in Bloomington.

Busse inquired on the total number of structures allowed, if you have a shed and [detached] garage can you not add an ADU? James responded that the standard allowance is two detached structures, so if you have a detached garage and shed, you would not be allowed a detached ADU.

Palermo discussed standards for cluster housing development. Dallessandro noted this level of density being a good fit for transitional areas between high density and commercial development and single-family neighborhoods.

8.8 Multifamily Parking Standards Update

Planner Mike Palermo presented a PowerPoint summarizing the study and feedback received from the HRA and Planning Commission. Staff are proposing to reduce the parking minimum to 1.8 spaces per unit, while retaining current incentives to further lower the minimum parking requirement.

Carter was open to removing minimum parking requirements entirely.

Palermo noted that Planning Commission and HRA members were interested in going below 1.8 spaces per unit.

Coulter was supportive of going lower than 1.8 spaces per unit.

Palermo noted that number was chosen from observation and discussing with developers what actual demand is. However, we do allow flexibility to go lower.

Coulter noted that 8 of the 16 cities shown in the study required 1.5 or less. Stated he wasn't sure he could support that 1.8 number based on recent trends we've seen.

Lowman stated in terms of arriving at a number, I'd rather start at zero and work back up to what we're comfortable with, rather than starting at the current standard and working down. We need to be bold and on the cutting edge of this.

Coulter noted that even without a requirement, developers will still build parking as to meet market demand for parking, they want people to rent in their building. Carter concurred, if there's a demand for parking the market should respond to that. Also interested to hear from staff what their experiences with developers have been on recent projects.

Nelson inquired if there was consideration of just using the parking study for each project and going with that number, or would this change remove the requirement to do a parking study? Palermo noted that not every project requires a parking study.

Mayor Busse noted that we could look at recent projects now coming online as test cases to see if we need to lower the requirement further. Palermo noted that was similar to comments made by the Planning Commission, to start at 1.8 spaces per unit with the existing incentives and continue looking at further reductions with new data.

Palermo also discussed parking requirement reductions in transit station areas.