

APPROVED

11.9.2022

**CITY OF WIXOM
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
SPECIAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, October 17, 2022**

The special meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Day at 7:30 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PRESENT:

Chairman:

Vice Chairman:

W. Day

P. Carter (Exc.)

R. Cousineau

S. Grossi (Exc.)

M. Lada

A. Lawrence

C. Tacy

Administration:

Assistant City Manager:

Planning Consultant:

D. Benson

B. Carlisle

AGENDA CHANGES: (None)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Tacy had corrections on Page 16. The sentence in the third paragraph should read, "Mr. Avantini commented they have talked to the developer at length..." Also, three sentences after that should read, "The property went back to the bank, some form of bankruptcy."

Motion made and seconded by Commissioners Cousineau and Lawrence to approve the September 26, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting minutes with corrections made by Commissioner Tacy.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

CORRESPONDENCE:

The City Manager's report for October 11, 2022 was distributed to the Commission.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC: (None)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: (None)

NEW BUSINESS:

1.) Village Center Area Ordinance Discussion

Mr. Carlisle explained that the Planning Commission won't see him as much moving forward; Doug Lewan would be present at most of these meetings. He said that he serves more as the Special Project Manager. The day-to-day operations will be Mr. Lewan. He said that when they were brought on by the City, one of the first charges they received was to start looking at the VCA ordinance. He knew that was a high priority of the Commission, as well as the City. He has reviewed the existing documents, including the map plan, the Downtown Design Guidelines, the drafts of the amended VCA ordinance, Planning Commission minutes and Council minutes. He thought he had a good view of the intent of the district and the amendments. Now he was hoping to get a good understanding from the Commission of their visions for the Sub Areas and if the ordinance matched what their vision was. He knew this went to the Council once and it was bounced back to the Planning Commission. There was then a joint meeting with the Council where additional ideas were suggested. He thought this was round three or four of amendments to this ordinance. He said it would be helpful for him to understand what the Commissioners' overall intent was of the Village Center Area, as well as the intent of the various Sub Areas.

Chairman Day thought this area should contain greater density than you would find in a typical suburban development with the greatest density along Pontiac Trail and Wixom Road. The density should decrease to where it was single-family homes further back to Section A. For him, this was about new urbanism. He wanted to develop a walkable community with local services that people can reach as pedestrians. In looking through the Design Guidelines, he saw that we have already deviated from them significantly. There was a strong preference for detached garages, which we didn't get. He said there were things that he would like to add back and we can't do that. He didn't want any backlit signage and we have that. If we could get rid of that, he would be ecstatic. We have been told that we can't attract customers with non-backlit signs, but Northville seems to do just fine. Basically, for him, it was looking at the downtowns that grew organically, like Northville and Milford, and trying to replicate that to the extent possible.

Commissioner Lada agreed with Chairman Day. He said he would add Fenton to that list. He thought that was where we were at, or maybe even ahead of where we are at as far as what their downtown looks like and the growth we are seeing.

Commissioner Tacy commented that when we started with the inception of what we saw the VCA looking like, architecturally we wanted partners who would step up to the plate and not give us subdivisions of the 1980s and 1990s. When we looked at the downtown, we had the property downtown. What we didn't have was the buildings. We were looking for that mixture of bungalow to American Foursquare to the architecture that you see that came about as people built moving out from the City-center area. We already have the subdivisions. The architectural features were something we spent a great deal of time on and not only how the houses looked, but where the garages were. Originally that area was laid out with back alleyways. We had more pocket parks. We wanted to promote the neighborhood feel that so many of those communities have. We certainly have the City pride. We've got the people who are the community; we just don't have a place for them to hang out together. Most recently, when the discussion came up again, we had been reading through what was missing – middle housing. We realized that we had allowed for residential

and we had commercial, but we didn't have that stepdown of where would duplexes go, where would the boarding houses go, where does it make sense to allow for that density of residential areas to go. We became concerned because the way it was laid out now, denser developments could be deeper into our communities and that was not something that we really wanted. We wanted to have the commercial area flex housing above some of the commercial areas along our main arterials but directly behind that would be where we would see that higher density going. As you moved out from the nucleus, you got into only single-family dwelling. That was why at the May 23rd meeting, we said we were in favor of the three distinct areas. Now we just need wording to go there.

Chairman Day said Mr. Carlisle has had fresh eyes to look at this. He was interested in what he saw and what he thought.

Mr. Carlisle said he had thoughts, but he wanted to finish this exercise first. He would then talk about his thoughts and what he was hearing the Commissioners say about their vision.

Chairman Day said that we have had a lot of pressure to allow for a strip mall and drive-thru restaurants and he thought we had to hold the line on anything like that. Those are not what we want in our downtown area. It was not what you would find in Northville, Milford or any other city that has grown organically.

Commissioner Lawrence said that he would not want to see the businesses with condos up above them. Those are dotted all over in Walled Lake and they are a disaster. Most of them are sitting empty. They get filled with a business and the next thing you know, they are gone. They have the ones on Maple that don't seem to be even finished. Also in Walled Lake, where the Dairy Queen is, businesses are on the main floor and maybe the owner lives above. He was glad we didn't have that.

Mr. Carlisle said that was mixed use. He clarified that Commissioner Lawrence did not support mixed use. Commissioner Lawrence said he would not support that type. Half of the ones near the Dairy Queen in Walled Lake are still empty and they've been there for more than five years. To him that made no sense.

Mr. Benson asked if he was specifically referring to residential on top. Commissioner Lawrence said he was referring mainly to the ones on Maple across from where the school building was torn down. More than half of the businesses are empty. He thought there were people living in the condos above the businesses.

Chairman Day thought those two developments were significantly different from what we were looking at here. He commented that there was no downtown around the Dairy Queen in Walled Lake. The development along Maple was also a stand-alone with no downtown area around it. He didn't have any problem with residences being above retail and office space on the ground floor. He thought we could allow either one, depending on the market.

Commissioner Lada thought the area mentioned in Walled Lake had no foot traffic and we have that in Wixom.

Mr. Benson knew that folks were not interested in a second-floor office. The Kumon space was a good example. He has been working with their real estate agent and they have gotten almost no bites. The push was for ground-floor office or within shopping centers. To go up two or three stories, it would have to be residential or a faux façade situation.

Chairman Day thought we could put nice condos with garages behind. He thought they would do well because of the foot traffic and the services. With more rooftops, we get more services.

Mr. Benson stated that we know the preference for the Planning Commission was for the three districts. He was curious about their thoughts on the fine edges around that. Sub Area B was designated primarily for the townhouses and the school. He asked if their vision was to allow for that kind of density on the church property as an allowable use or on the west side of Wixom Road where it was currently Sub Area A, but maybe it could be Sub Area B. Also, north of the Cavallero property, there are a couple acreage pieces that are currently single-family residential that someday someone may want to combine them. There are only three large acreage pieces left and that will be the focus, but the smaller pieces, as the district comes together, was worth some discussion.

Chairman Day commented that we need to keep in mind what the feedback from the community has been when we have looked at higher density west of Wixom Road.

Commissioner Tacy didn't want to open the door to any more potential apartment complexes. We have plenty of those. Keeping the higher density areas closer to the City center area and still limiting that to a duplex scenario, or small townhomes, was still in the best interest of what our base of residents were telling us they do or do not want.

Mr. Carlisle asked for clarification on what she meant by apartments. Commissioner Tacy explained that a big American Foursquare where somebody has subdivided that into three or four units still belongs in the Sub Area B. She didn't know that she would want to see that because we are walking that fine line of opening it up. We would be allowing that density to creep into Sub Area A.

Chairman Day said he had no problem with rental above retail in the Core Area.

Commissioner Lada asked if these areas were set. Mr. Benson said no, they do not have to be set like they are now. This was a draft we came up with by looking at the existing uses.

Commissioner Lada thought either the chart was wrong or the map was wrong.

Commissioner Tacy said that Sub Area A should be the lowest density, but on the chart, it said "two-family dwellings or duplexes are admitted."

Commissioner Lada added that "dwellings and workshops above garages" so businesses could run out of it was also in Sub Area A.

Mr. Carlisle said his firm did not write this. One of the things he talked to Drew about was that he agreed that there was disconnect in terms of what the Commissioners

wanted and what was on the paper itself. He said he had four fundamental questions for the Commissioners. The first question was as this is currently written, does this meet the intent of what you want for each district. If these are going to be broken into districts, there should be a clear intent of what the boundaries are, why they are that way, and what you are trying to achieve in each of these Sub Areas. The second question was are the uses listed in these districts appropriate and do they fulfill and push the intent of the vision that you want to achieve in each Sub Area. The third question was are the bulk standards in each of the Sub Areas appropriate. As he read this, there was really no differentiation between the bulk standards for what you could do in the various Sub Areas. The last question was if the geography was appropriate. Are the lines on the map in the intended areas? Mr. Carlisle recommended that we have that conversation and he will take back these responses. He will do a little more research and come back with his recommendations. He didn't want to start doing that until he had a conversation about the Commission's thoughts. He commented that the first rule in zoning is make what you want easy and make what you don't want harder. If we could nail down the vision, we can start crafting these regulations to ensure that we get that moving forward.

Commissioner Tacy said that the big red area on the map was Sub Area A. She felt this should be one-family detached dwellings.

Commissioner Day wondered if Sub Area A should come all the way to Pontiac Trail like it does.

Commissioner Lada didn't think it should. He suggested that at the northern most point of the blue section of the map, the Core, that we would draw a line straight east, and to be contiguous to Maple Road. The new imaginary line would be part of the Core.

Mr. Carlisle said that from a house layout standpoint, it would be difficult to redevelop the single-family lots. You would have to put them together and it may not be worth the value. You are more likely to keep those as-is for now. If they were part of the area where we allowed duplexes or townhomes, there would be a higher chance that we would put them together and something would happen.

Chairman Day said one of his concerns in terms of making this easier to get through was the area west of Wixom Road between Theodore and Renton, which was in the Sub Area B. That area allows for higher density than the people who live in that area want. We have had this room packed and one of their big concerns was traffic. He felt that was one of those things where traffic would not get better unless it got worse. Mr. Benson explained that this area only incorporates the school property. Chairman Day thanked him for clarifying that.

Mr. Carlisle said he heard the clear intent for the red area, Sub Area A, to remain single-family and single-family only.

Commissioner Lawrence commented that if we want to maintain Sub Area A as single family detached, the Cavallaro property does not fit that.

Mr. Benson said that was why he wanted to clarify the question about attached in any of the situations.

Commissioner Tacy said that what was there was already there. What was there was built with a ton of green space and well laid out. That developer was very generous in making a layout that felt not like something that belonged downtown. What we keep seeing is developers coming in trying to maximize the density in an area that is traditionally single-family homes.

Mr. Benson said he expected the Cavallaro property project to come back sooner, rather than later. After his last conversation, he advised the applicants that the Planning Commission was not interested in another conceptual meeting.

Commissioner Lada said that they have space on that property to construct a similar development as to what was just west of them. Mr. Benson agreed it was a similar size parcel. Commissioner Lada commented that we were not closing the door on some type of development there.

Chairman Day commented that the only border change that he saw would be the one suggested by Commissioner Lada. Hopefully, as the City develops and the population increases, there will be more of a need for commercial.

Mr. Carlisle wanted to be clear on this issue. He indicated that the parcel could be split so that half of the parcel was one zoning district and the other half of the parcel was another zoning district. It was not a best practice but he has seen it.

Commissioner Tacy thought that would be more appropriate for what we hoped for development.

Mr. Benson wondered with the flexibility that the Planning Commission does have, maybe it made more sense to leave it in Sub Area A. The larger portion of the St. Matthew's Church parcel would fall under single-family. When someone comes forward with a development proposal with the understanding they can do commercial on the street side, it would be part of the waiver process.

Commissioner Tacy said she would rather have it all spelled out. If the current Commissioners are gone, someone would try to remember why it looked so funny. It would be clear that we had hoped commercial would go across that area.

Commissioner Lada stated that these three lots are the church, the power lines and the adult nursing home. He didn't see any of those lots changing ownership any time soon.

Chairman Day said he would rather negotiate it the other way toward single-family than negotiate all of that area for business. Mr. Benson commented that keeping that as Sub Area A was designated as residential and they would negotiate with us if they want to do businesses too. Chairman Day said he was saying the opposite. He would rather have those parcels with split zoning. We really want to encourage the denser commercial development along both Old Wixom Road and New Wixom Road, south of Pontiac Trail.

Commissioner Tacy said she still wanted the rest of the arch built for Old Wixom Road and New Wixom Road. She thought that looked stupid. She explained that when you are coming north on Wixom Road, there are two half walls with trees. If you are driving straight up Wixom Road, there should be another brick wall to the right so

there are two gateways into the City. No one trying to get to the downtown goes left and comes back over. She asked why that was not finished. Based on the color chart, we have determined that this chart was wrong.

Mr. Carlisle said that this was why he wanted to have this discussion. He wanted to hear their thoughts for each of the Sub Areas and then amend the table to match.

Chairman Day thought we could just reverse A and B.

Mr. Carlisle stated that in A we are allowing retail, but not in B.

Commissioner Tacy stated that the whole chart was wrong.

Commissioner Lada said that retail should not be permitted in Sub Area A.

Chairman Day stated that we have the two-family duplexes allowed in A, but not in B. That doesn't make any sense.

Commissioner Cousineau asked why Gunnar Mettala Park was included in the VCA. Mr. Benson said that the park was also part of the DDA District, so it allowed DDA tax capture to be expended there. There were also discussions about if there was ever some form of housing allowed there, they wanted it to be part of the district.

Chairman Day explained that there was a proposal not too many years ago from someone who wanted to do a lot of upgrades in the Park in exchange for getting part of the Park for development. He didn't see how it would hurt to have it in the VCA.

Commissioner Cousineau remembered that when that proposal came before the Commission, there was an outcry from the public about why we would even consider doing anything with this park at all.

Mr. Benson guessed that being able to use those funds to connect Gunnar Mettala Lane to Theodore was the most compelling argument.

Chairman Day asked if you took it out of the VCA, what would it be. Mr. Benson said that the Planning Commission would have to decide what it would be zoned. Mr. Carlisle asked if the City had a park zoning district and Mr. Benson did not think we did.

Commissioner Lada asked what the Wixom Habitat was zoned. Mr. Benson thought it was zoned R-2.

Commissioner Tacy said that there were several other areas where the chart didn't match. She wondered if he would go through this with a fine-toothed comb to figure it out.

Mr. Carlisle said he thought he had good direction on Sub Section A. He asked if the Commission was comfortable with the geography of the Core Area, which would be no residential, or if it was residential, it would be mixed use above commercial.

Commissioner Tacy said that for the purple area of the map, or Sub Area B, we were looking at it from the standpoint of developments you wouldn't want to see on the main arterial downtown. Commissioner Tacy noted that the hope is for an organic transition in density and there would have to be steps down in the downtown facades

and skyline from two to three stories, down to the duplex or boarding houses in original development. The skyline in Sub Area B wouldn't be necessarily as low as bungalow or regular single-family, but it could exist in that area behind your main commercial area.

Mr. Carlisle confirmed the primary uses would still be residential and Commissioner Tacy replied yes. He asked if there was any allowance for commercial in the purple area, or Sub Area B.

Mr. Benson wanted to make one piece of advocacy, specifically along Wixom Road. Perhaps we should consider special land use only because those street-side things do come up. A good example was the Purple Door Store. If we were to change that to currently construed, that becomes a complete existing non-conformity. We wouldn't shut anybody down but we also wouldn't allow flexibility for those kinds of things to happen in the future. That was fine if that was the intent. The flexibility would be nice because he could see opportunities for that to come up a little further north or the parcel in front of the school.

Chairman Day could understand that if somebody wanted to open a little boutique or a little business in one of those houses, turning it into commercial.

Mr. Carlisle asked if the Commissioners' suggestion was the area that was Sub Area B becoming part of the Core. Mr. Benson replied no. He would leave it as it was. A condition of the special land use would be if it was contiguous to Wixom Road. Potentially the Sub Area B could be expanded up to Maple Road west of Wixom Road. Any commercial use could be a special land use so the Commissioners would have control over it.

Commissioner Lada said he was having trouble agreeing to some of that before we agree what can happen in that area. He said he would rather go through the chart to see what things we agree can be done there and can't be done there. Then we can agree with what changes we make to the map that are special land use.

Commissioner Tacy said she would look at the school property. Let's say someday they close Wixom Elementary and sell that property. That was directly adjacent to our downtown so that would be within walking distance to put in something commercial. It would make sense there. What she didn't want there was businesses popping up north of that because we allowed it, but since there was no foot traffic density going that far, then we are stuck with empty buildings. We are trying to drive it into a central area so we always have the maximum foot traffic for success.

Chairman Day said he could see someone taking one of those houses and turning it into a hair salon. You don't need foot traffic for a hair salon. He thought that would be a perfectly fine use.

Playing devil's advocate, Commissioner Tacy asked if we had the ability to have the parking and the traffic that far up. She just came from her HOA meeting and they are already complaining about the traffic on Wixom Road. We can't do anything about it. To his point, she wondered if those properties could be developed that way or if that opened the door that they join the properties. As long as they are part of the Sub Area B, they will.

Chairman Day asked if it could be done for existing structures only. Mr. Benson didn't think so. If someone was going to go through the hassle of combining parcels and tearing down the buildings, they will probably go residential over commercial anyway. He didn't think it could be limited to the existing structures, nor did he think they would want to.

Mr. Benson indicated that by leaving it as a special land use, it would allow us the control over what would ultimately happen. It would leave the flexibility. It would be difficult to try to fit the VCA-style single family there.

Commissioner Tacy agreed with Commissioner Lada. She wanted to see what the uses were for the different areas. Once we hone in on the uses for Sub Area B, we could see if it warrants extending it.

Chairman Day knew people complained about traffic but that didn't stop them from putting in a big new development at the corner of Glengary and Wixom Roads. All of that traffic is going to come through Wixom and we aren't getting the tax dollars for that development. He felt we needed another north-south route and we won't get it until the traffic gets worse.

Mr. Benson noted that the traffic benefits the downtown. The slower those cars go, the more likely they are to stop.

Commissioner Tacy said they could get so frustrated that they avoid Wixom all together.

Mr. Carlisle suggested that they review all of the uses on the Use Table. He stated that Sub Area B, as written, one-family detached is permitted and they all agreed that was fine.

Commissioner Tacy felt that the bottom of Sub Area A should be in Sub Area B. One-family detached dwellings or townhouse dwellings and two-family duplexes do not belong under Sub Area A.

Mr. Carlisle reviewed the uses with the Commission. It was determined that three-family attached should not be a special land use in Sub Area A. Special land use in Sub Area B was permitted. Five or more attached single-family is also allowed in Sub Area B. Senior apartments/independent living was permitted in Sub Area B but not in Sub Area A. Flex space housing/live work units should only be allowed in the Core. Mixed use dwellings that front on Pontiac Trail or Wixom Road is permitted in the Core. Dwellings and workspaces above garages are not permitted in the Core. Retail businesses with uses up to 60,000 square feet is not permitted in Sub Area A.

Mr. Carlisle mentioned that when he writes ordinances like this he breaks retail down into much smaller categories. He thought 60,000 square feet was a very large building. Usually in this type of environment, 5,000 to 10,000 square feet was the kind of scale you wanted. He suggested we reduce the 60,000 to a lower number and break it into two different categories. He said the multi-tenant building that might be over 10,000 square foot was fine, but we don't want one single use of 20,000 or 30,000 square feet in this area. He wondered if we should allow retail in the Sub Area

B and it was decided it would be a special land use and only contiguous to Wixom Road.

Mr. Carlisle continued with drive-thru service (primarily pharmacies and banks) being a special land use in the Core only. Standard sit-down restaurant without a drive-thru is a special land use in Sub Area B and permitted in the Core. Restaurants with taverns and outdoor seating is special land use in both the Sub Area B and the Core. Restaurants with open front windows is also special land use in both the Sub Area B and the Core. Rooftop restaurant/bar is not permitted in Sub Area B, but allowed in the Core. Carryout restaurants are not permitted in Sub Area B and a special land use in the Core. Cocktail lounge is not permitted in Sub Area B and a special land use in the Core.

Commissioner Cousineau asked why restaurants and taverns, and restaurants with open windows were special land uses and not just permitted uses. Mr. Benson thought this was tied with past practice, but to allow a layer of control so the Commission would have to see them before they go in. The ordinance in a separate section talks about the outdoor seating arrangements being permitted as an administrative review which was kind of a conflict. His impression was if you are going to do a new development, the Commission would have to approve the special land use for outdoor seating at that time. He said if Wixom Bar wanted to create an outdoor seating arrangement, they can do that through an administrative review. He wondered if that was coherent with what the Commissioners' expectations were.

Commissioner Lada commented that when the Drafting Table came in for outdoor seating, that was for one year. Mr. Benson explained that was a temporary land use. They are currently looking at reconfiguring their outdoor seating to get it out of the parking lot. They want to expand on the side. The interpretation has been that was an administrative review if they want to expand the outdoor dining on the western edge. If that was the case, he said the special land use review aspect may not be necessary. It could be a permitted use that the Planning Commission would still see when a new development comes through.

Commissioner Tacy asked if it was reviewed administratively, would it still mean that although the Planning Commission didn't see it, the planner was still involved. It wasn't just one set of eyes but multiple. Mr. Benson said that was correct. It ends up as a zoning compliance. She said she was okay with this as long as our planner would put it through the paces as if this was coming before the City for the first time. Mr. Benson said that was exactly how it worked. He provided another example. If the vet office moves out and a restaurant moves in there, it is now a new use and they would have to come before the Commission.

Commissioner Cousineau said he was always a little concerned in respect to administrative reviews because staff changes. He thought the staff had a lot of authority.

Commissioner Tacy questioned what structural use encompassed. Did it go back out to the planner so there was the process. She wondered if the Planning Commission was comfortable with that.

Chairman Day said that an example of staff changing, when the Mediterranean restaurant moved in, they installed a raceway sign. Raceway signs are not allowed, but that was approved administratively. The new person didn't realize raceway signs were not allowed.

Mr. Benson explained that there was always the understanding that an administrative review item could be brought to the Planning Commission if it was deemed necessary. If the planner does not feel comfortable deciding, he would bring it to the Commission.

Commissioner Cousineau felt this Commission was unique. He felt this was a very cooperative group that worked well together. It was very different from a lot of communities. It is not politically motivated in his mind. Everybody was very objective and they want what was best for the community. If we had a different makeup on this Commission, he said his attitude would be very different in terms of bringing murky items to this group. He was very comfortable with this Commission. As long as you have faith in the guys who are making the administrative review, you are okay. But if we get that turnover, it may not be okay.

Commissioner Lada agreed with Commissioner Cousineau. Administratively, if two people change, it could be a very different review. But if two people leave from the Planning Commission, there is still institutional knowledge.

Mr. Carlisle thought this was a good discussion but probably worthy of a separate discussion almost internally about what our policies are and what the Commission deems to be administrative review and what they don't.

Commissioner Tacy said that we used to have workshop sessions and that was where we figured a lot of that out. It was usually the second meeting of the month.

Mr. Benson commented that one of the RRC requirements is a training strategy and having a plan to move forward. That was on the to-do list working with Carlisle Wortman.

Commissioner Cousineau questioned the timing on this ordinance. He assumed we would want to adopt whatever changes were necessary as soon as possible. Mr. Carlisle replied that a public hearing would be held in front of the Planning Commission and there would be two readings at the City Council level because it is an ordinance change.

Mr. Carlisle indicated that there were a couple more uses to review on the list. Service establishment of an office or showroom (like a vacuum sales and repair shop) was permitted in the Core. Hotels are a special land use in the Core. Bed and breakfast are a special land use in Sub Area B and the Core, but not permitted in Sub Area A. Funeral homes is special land use in Sub Area B but not permitted in the Core. Personal service establishment was not permitted in Sub Area A, but a special land use in Sub Area B and permitted in the Core. Pet grooming and training was a special land use in Sub Area B and the Core. Office uses is a special land use in Sub Area B and permitted in the Core. Banks with or without drive-thru facilities is special land use in the Core, but not permitted in Sub Area B. Business services is special land use in Sub Area B and permitted in the Core. Conference and meeting facilities is

special land use in the Core. Twenty-four-hour emergency medical clinic is special land use in the Core but not permitted in Sub Area B. Medical office is special land use in Sub Area B and the Core. Daycare is special land use in Sub Area B, but not permitted in the Core. Adult daycare is not permitted in Sub Area A, a special land use in Sub Area B and not permitted in the Core. Vet clinic is special land use in both Sub Area B and the Core.

Mr. Benson went back to the medical and dental office uses. We have that as a special land use in the Core. He asked if it was a permitted use in a multi-use retail center. It seemed like a likely thing. He would like these clinics permitted in the Core because they are likely not going to be standalone developments. They would be filling in an existing tenant space. It was decided to leave the medical and dental office uses as a special land use.

It was agreed that schools are a special land use in Sub Area B and not permitted in the Core. Business school or college is not permitted in Sub Area B but a special land use in the Core. Place of worship is fine where it is. Civic buildings are special land use in Sub Area B and a special land use in the Core and Sub Area A. Government offices is special land use in Sub Area B and permitted in the Core, but not permitted in Sub Area A.

Mr. Carlisle said he would lower the maximum square footage for a bowling alley. He felt 60,000 was too large. It would be considered a special land use in the Core but not permitted in Sub Area B. A health club should also be lowered from 60,000 square feet and it would not be permitted in Sub Area B but a special land use in the Core. Public and private non-commercial recreation is not permitted in Sub Area B and a special land use in the Core. Social clubs are a special land use in the Core. Theaters and places of assemblies should also be reduced from 1,500 and permitted in the Core, but removed from Sub Area B.

Mr. Carlisle asked if this changed Commissioner Lada's opinion on the boundary of the transition area and he replied yes, but he had a question about the boundaries of the VCA. He wondered why the property at the southeast corner of Wixom and Maple was not included. Chairman Day replied that they chose not to be a part of the VCA.

Commissioner Tacy asked if Sub Area B should be extended west of Wixom Road all the way north to Maple Road and that we include the church property because it does fall under the special land use. Mr. Carlisle thought that did a lot to differentiate between Sub Area A and Sub Area B by separating it.

Commissioner Lada stated that the church on Wixom Road was also a school. He was informed that was kept as a special land use.

Chairman Day was curious about Mr. Carlisle's comments regarding the Design Standards as they currently exist. Mr. Carlisle thought going through that exercise really helped in terms of distinguishing the intent between Sub Area A and B and the Core. He thought the same exercise should also be done about the Design Standards. What was appropriate for one area might not be appropriate for another.

Commissioner Tacy noticed that on page 16 of the Design Guidelines under Flex Space Housing/Lofts and page 18 of the draft document he was looking at, Flex Space Housing Live/Work Dwelling Units, the Commission said that they did not want balconies on the fronts of those buildings. We only wanted balconies in the Flex Space Live/Work spaces to be rear facing because we wanted the traditional downtown commercial area to look traditional. Unless you are in New Orleans, most places here do not have balconies. It did not get changed. Also, when the Commission was talking about Design Standards regarding how the facades should look, windows and what was appropriate downtown, it had actual design drawings of what it would look like with x amount of glass to x amount of building. She couldn't find that anywhere and asked what document that was in. She thought it should be in the Design Standards because the Commission took a lot of time working on that. It was just reviewed by Kelly McIntyre of CIB Planning. Mr. Benson indicated that page 26 of the draft ordinance mentioned the window requirements. Commissioner Tacy thought there were more visuals. Mr. Benson said he would have to double check past drafts to see if there were more examples.

Mr. Carlisle said there were three things that jumped out at him. He started with the least important. He asked if they were comfortable with the terms Sub Area A, Sub Area B and Core, or if we could be a little more creative with what we were trying to achieve with them. The Commissioners felt that was fine to be more creative. Secondly, Mr. Carlisle stated there was no differentiate or actual purpose of intent statement for each of the core areas and he felt that was really important to justify it if we were to ever get challenged in court. The third item was regarding subjectivity versus objectivity. He understood from reading this that the Planning Commission had a lot of latitude and allowance for deviations from some of the requirements, which was fine. But there were no real standards as to how you make that determination. He suggested that we put some standards in there for the purpose of the intent of the district. We would be tying into what our intent was for how we can allow for deviation. He thought it would strengthen this in terms of defensibility if we were challenged.

Commissioner Tacy said she would like to know how she could avoid misspeaking. Sometimes she knows she doesn't like something, but she wondered how she could say that in a way it could be backed up other than it was a gut feeling. She wanted to be able to say she wasn't thrilled with the presentation and this was why. She wanted to have the words in writing and she wanted to learn how to communicate that. Mr. Carlisle said that if we do a good job of writing the intent statement for each of those sub areas, it would help with the argument for or against deviations.

Mr. Carlisle asked if everyone was comfortable with the discussion and the direction that we are moving on this.

Commissioner Cousineau had one more comment regarding the park. When the project came before the Commission to swap properties, he was approached by many people who were opposed. He was still concerned about the park being in the VCA. If he didn't mention that, he wouldn't be representing his constituents.

Commissioner Tacy asked which way left us more vulnerable, the way it is designated now or by designating it another way.

Mr. Benson said that we do not have the designation of "parks" on our zoning map. Every park parcel has an underlying zoning district. It is zoned VCA but its functional use is a park. Gilbert Willis Park and the Habitat are both zoned R-2. Given that they are under City control, there are numerous stops in the road. Nothing will sneak up on them.

Commissioner Lada asked what afforded it more protection through oversight – continuing to be part of the VCA or not being part of the VCA. Mr. Benson didn't think it made a difference. He did think being a part of the VCA was better justified for the DDA District.

Commissioner Cousineau asked what the Planning Commission could do to promote the downtown development. In regards to the rooftops, we have some potential for some additional development in our community. We really need to be drawing from outside of Wixom. If you look at Milford and Northville, their restaurants bring people in to their community. The boutiques feed off of the restaurants.

Commissioner Tacy said that one of the concerns that came up long ago when we first saw how the retail space would be configured internally was that they were smaller than we wanted them to be. She wondered how much that impacted our ability to attract people. LaCasita is very small and she was disappointed when she saw how they built out their space. For the amount of money they had to pay, they didn't have much space. She hoped the next developer we work with would work with us to develop something more reasonable.

Mr. Benson said he spends significantly more time trying to attract developers to the VCA properties compared IRO properties, as IRO properties have a much larger pool of interest. Specifically, two stories downtown seems to be difficult. No one is interested in that. He said he was optimistic with the Renton property. We will be moving forward with a process for the Planning Commission and the City Council visioning that area and putting it on the market. This should be an aggressive opportunity to facilitate development there. We will have about two to two and a half acres that is possible. It is a parcel that is about the same size as the east retail with the difference being that we can control it and the City can package it better. The parcel goes up to the Air Line Trail. One of the problems he thought we would find was that two stories will still be a challenge there given the amount of parking that is required. That was not to say that we can't pursue it and actively look for it, but to get those second story uses, even if they are residential. We will have to be very creative and understanding of the constraints of that site. Mr. Benson said there was a recreational use, a dance studio, that was interested in moving downtown but we don't have anywhere to put them. The only vacancies we have are the Heath Building, the Kumon space (as of August) and a vacant unit next to Hungry Howies. When we try to facilitate new development, we take them to the East Retail folks and they come back and say we can do that but they need three other tenants or they could do the west retail expansion. It is \$28 a square foot for the lease rate. As a point of reference, you can get \$14-\$15 a square foot further north on Wixom Road. Those are the functional numbers we are going up against. Having the opportunity for flexibility is good but it is going to take a significant package of financial tools to get the price per square foot down to a place where we can attract high volume.

Commissioner Tacy asked if we were only looking at attracting someone to do the frontage of the east retail space or if we were looking to do the L-shaped building. Mr. Benson replied that we would love to get the whole thing. There was a case to be made that we have the market for more retail space. A lot of people say they will do single story with a taller façade but they want a drive-thru. As soon as we tell them that was not an option, they don't come back with anything else.

Chairman Day commented that property was not making them any money as it is. He thought we needed to be more patient than they are.

Mr. Benson said he thought the Commission would be very excited about the opportunity of the Renton properties. It wasn't as ideal of a location, but given the control factors that we have in the process, we can really vision the options of what we want to do there. He noted that there was a meeting of the DDA for strategic planning on Wednesday. After his conversations, he believed they would be fully on board with taking this through the collective process and getting this on the market next year. We are being aggressive to the degree that we can in new ways that we haven't done before.

Commissioner Lada asked what the best possible timeline of when we would see this ordinance enacted. Mr. Carlisle thought this could come back to the Planning Commission in less than a month. He assumed the Commission would want to review it one more time before the public hearing. Mr. Benson thought it would be possible to get a public hearing scheduled for the second meeting in November. If there are only minor amendments, he thought it would work.

Commissioner Tacy asked if we would have to have a second public hearing if there was a significant change made. Mr. Carlisle informed the Commission that they could always keep a public hearing open. It does not have to be closed. The public hearing could be held at the end of November and if there are changes made that the Commission was not comfortable with it, they could keep the public hearing open into the December meeting. It does not have to re-advertised. The Commissioners agreed that would work.

Mr. Benson said that the Commission should also discuss the number of hotels they want to allow in the City at some point in the future. Mr. Carlisle said that in one of the communities where he works, they commissioned a study about how many hotels they could support in the market. They used that to limit the hotels that they would allow. They use it more for defensibility purposes in case they ever get challenged. It was not an unusual request to do a market study. Commissioner Tacy thought that would be a great idea. She remembered asking about strip centers. The onus was on the developer to do that study. We couldn't say yes or no because it met the intent of the zoning. She didn't want to assume that someone was doing their own market study.

Commissioner Tacy said she would rather have the City do the study and have it in writing so we can say yes or no rather than assume someone else knows there was a market for it.

Mr. Benson said he would discuss this with Mr. Carlisle at a later time. They would also discuss the mini-storage units, as this had come up with Planning Commission before.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC: (None)

STAFF COMMENTS:

Mr. Benson thanked everyone for their time tonight. He hoped they enjoyed it as much as he has.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Commissioner Lada asked when Biggby Coffee was coming. Mr. Benson said they submitted their plans again. They have now agreed to not have their own dumpster, so they are back to their original plan. They are fixing the conditions of the original site plan approval. It was a new franchisee. He hoped it would be by the end of the year, but that might be too aggressive.

ADJOURNMENT:

This meeting of the Planning Commission was motioned and adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Catherine Buck
City Clerk