

CITY OF NORTHVILLE
Planning Commission
August 21, 2018
Northville City Hall – Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER:

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

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Steve Kirk
Andrew Krenz
Carol Maise
Dave Mielock
Christopher Miller
Mark Russell
Ann Smith
Jeff Snyder
Donna Tinberg

Absent: None

Also present: Ken Roth, Mayor
Pat Sullivan, City Manager
Sally Elmiger, Planning Consultant

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION by Snyder, support by Maise, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: July 17, 2018

Motion by Tinberg, support by Smith, to approve the July 17, 2018 minutes as published.

Motion carried 8-0-1 (Russell abstained).

5. CITIZEN COMMENTS: None.

6. REPORTS:

A. CITY ADMINISTRATION:

City Manager Sullivan reported that last night City Council had the 2nd reading and approved:

- Zoning Ordinance Amendment/Articles 18, 25, 26 Temporary Uses
- Zoning Ordinance Amendment/Article 21 Electronic Changeable Copy Signs

Council had changed the language to the Temporary Uses amendment slightly to make sure it was clear that the regulations regarding food trucks did not apply to private events on private property.

B. PLANNING COMMISSION: None.

C. OTHER COMMUNITY/GOVERNMENTAL LIAISONS: None.

7. DISCUSSION

RESIDENTIAL MASSING – DRAFT PUBLIC INPUT TOOL

Planning Consultant Elmiger said that she had provided a draft online public input tool, based on a previous tool developed for the City of Plymouth when that city was dealing with residential massing uses. The public input tool could be posted online using SurveyMonkey.com, whose software would compile results, allow analysis such as grouping answers by residents in different parts of the City, and comparing how people in different parts of the City answered different questions. For instance, people in one part of the City might answer questions differently about residential massing than people in another part of the City. The SurveyMonkey program allowed a stipulation of one response per computer, based on IP addresses. SurveyMonkey would allow respondents to make additional comments.

Planning Consultant Elmiger said it was important to know the right questions to ask and also how long a window would be given to respond to the public input tool.

The questions could also be in paper form and be available at City Hall, Northville Library, etc.

Discussion included:

- In Plymouth, the time frame for the public input tool to be open was one month.
- Different ways of promoting the public input tool included possibly disseminating information during festival time, sending information via the City email list, publishing information and linking the SurveyMonkey site on the City website, placing press releases in various publications, etc.
- Should question #6 regarding *new homes built in my neighborhood* be separated to specifically call out *new homes built where an existing home had been in my neighborhood*? New homes that replaced existing homes often replaced small structures with larger homes, resulting in a size/massing that might appear out of character to the neighborhood.

Considerable discussion was held as to whether to separate the question regarding *new homes in my neighborhood* that resulted from a teardown, or resulted from building on a vacant lot. The answer would not necessarily affect ordinance language, and the massing of new homes had the same in effect in neighborhoods whether or not they were built on vacant lots or were the result of a teardown, but separating the questions might sharpen the response and the data received.

The consensus of the Commission was to separate question #6 regarding *new homes built in my neighborhood* into 2 questions: one for teardowns and one for new homes on vacant lots.

- Question #11 should be changed to specifically call out additions and new homes.
- Question #12 could be clarified by changing the wording to: *If yes, what would you want the revised ordinance to do?*
 - a. *Allow larger homes*
 - b. *Require smaller homes*

- c. *Keep homes that are the same size as other houses ~~on my street~~ in my neighborhood.*
- d. *Other:*

- The map was divided into geographic areas labeled as follows:
 - A. Larger lots, more modern construction.
 - B. Smaller lots than A but visibly different than Cabbagetown
 - C. Cabbagetown
 - D. Historic District
 - E. Historic but outside of the Historic District
 - F. Bealtown

The consensus of the Commission was to add more road markers to the map.

- Was it important for renters to participate (Question #2)? Information gathered from renters might be useful in terms of specific analysis as to their attitudes toward Northville, and in terms of what they might be looking for as a future homeowner in Northville.
- The consensus of the Commission was that a question should be added asking how long a respondent had lived in the community, with different time periods given, perhaps 1-10 years, 10-30 years, and over 30 years.
- Regarding #5, which asked *did you . . .* (tear down, build an addition, leave the house as is, don't own a residential property), another question might be asked *do you plan to . . .*

The consensus of the Commission was to modify Question #5 to read: *did you or do you plan to . . .*

- Should there be subsets of questions for residents and non-residents, including people who owned rental properties in the City but didn't live there themselves? Planning Consultant Elmiger thought this information could be gathered through the analysis already available through the SurveyMonkey platform.

Chair Kirk asked that the results of the public input be delivered to the Planning Commission, City Council and Staff.

After brief further discussion, the consensus of the Commission was for Planning Consultant Elmiger to incorporate tonight's comments in the public input tool, and move ahead with posting it on SurveyMonkey.com, with paper copies available at the Building Department counter and the Library.

FRONT PORCH INCENTIVE – DRAFT ORDINANCE

Referencing her August 15, 2018 memorandum, and the August 15, 2018 handout showing draft ordinance language for front porch and rear garage incentives, Planning Consultant Elmiger explained that the proposed language incentivized constructing front porches for single-family properties that chose to locate a garage in the rear of the property. The reasoning behind the incentives included the idea that front-facing garages diminished the walkability of a neighborhood, and reduced the opportunity for interaction between the homeowner and those walking down the sidewalk. This language was based on an ordinance developed by the City of Plymouth, but showed adaptations specific to the City of Northville.

In Plymouth, the goal had been to allow a homeowner to construct a covered front porch in the front setback and not have the porch count toward lot coverage. The incentive was eligible to people who were constructing a garage in the rear third of their property, whether attached or detached.

The intent was to preserve traditional neighborhood designs and walkability, by increasing the space in front of a residential property for pedestrians and neighbor interaction while devoting less space to driveways, parking areas, and vehicular uses.

The Plymouth language applied to both new houses and existing homes. Existing homes could qualify if the homeowner was planning on constructing or keeping a rear garage in the rear third of their property.

Plymouth had residential standards; Northville did not. Plymouth used the residential standards to address front facing garages. Plymouth felt that front facing garages encouraged people to drive right into the garage and never go outside to enter their home; this situation did not fit with the character of Plymouth neighborhoods. Specific standards that had been added to the Plymouth ordinance were listed in Planning Consultant Elmiger's August 15 letter.

Planning Consultant Elmiger concluded her comments.

Discussion included:

- Section 18.11.8, read: *An open, unenclosed, and uncovered porch or paved terrace may project . . .* Did Northville want to include paved terraces in this regulation? Didn't paved terraces tie directly to lot coverage? Planning Consultant Elmiger said paved terraces were not included in lot coverage in Northville.
- Basically the new language said that, for new homes, if there was a garage in the rear third of the yard, a covered porch could extend 4 feet into the front yard setback and that 4 feet would not count toward lot coverage. For existing homes, separate language in 18.11.8.2 applied.
- Deep lots would not easily accommodate a garage in the rear third of the lot without adding significant pavement and without requiring a resident to walk a significant distance to their door. The existing ordinance required that a detached garage be at least 10 feet from the rear line of the house. Perhaps that requirement should remain, in lieu of requiring the garage be in the rear third of the property.
- Corner lots were addressed in Section 18.11.8.1.e.
- The draft language should also apply to duplexes, which often had front facing garages.

Commissioner Tinberg thought the massing issue should be addressed before the Commission acted on the front porch incentives. Without an ordinance addressing mass, incentivizing front porches would give a new way for houses to be even bigger. Commissioner Smith pointed out that Plymouth had their floor area ratio (FAR) in place before offering front porch incentives.

Planning Consultant Elmiger said that the definition of floor area counted porches 50%, so perhaps a compromise would be to put the front porch incentive in place, with 50% of the porch in the setback counting toward lot coverage. This language could remain until the massing issue was addressed, when the front porch incentives could be amended.

The Commission discussed the nature of front facing garages, including the way they added mass to a house, and the importance of having detached and rear garages in a historic community.

Commissioner Krenz said he would be willing to entertain a tradeoff on massing if the tradeoff encouraged people to go out their front doors to use their front porches and talk to their neighbors.

The Commission asked to see a copy of Plymouth's residential standards at the next meeting.

Commissioners Smith and Russell spoke in favor of beginning to look at language for a Floor Area Ratio in Northville.

OTHER DISCUSSION

Commissioner Russell asked Staff to follow up on the house at Wing and Dunlap where the basement had been raised and mass had therefore been increased.

Chair Kirk encouraged all Commissioners who were not able to attend the recent training to view the video of the meeting online.

8. ADJOURN

Seeing that there was no further discussion, Chair Kirk asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION by Maise, support by Russell, to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl McGuire
Recording Secretary

Approved as published 09/04/18