

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

Tuesday, March 4, 2025 - 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers - 8150 Barbara Avenue

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Weber called the Planning Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Jonathan Weber (*Chair*)
Trisha Presley (Secretary)
Jason Teiken
Aida Schaefer
Robert Heidenreich
Amy Hunting
Dennis Wippermann

Commissioners Absent: Scott Clancy (Vice-Chair) - excused
Lance Twedt - excused

Staff Present: Jason Ziemer, Community Development Director
Kevin Shay, Planning Consultant
Stacy Bodsberg, Community Development Support Specialist

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of December 3, 2024, Planning Commission Meeting.

Motion by Wippermann, Second by Teiken, to Approve the Minutes as Submitted.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

4. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Rezoning from A, Agricultural to R-3A, High Density Residential; Easement Vacation to vacate an existing Drainage and Utility Easement; and Preliminary & Final Plat for a two-lot subdivision to be known as Orchard Heights 3rd Addition located at 1845 77th Street West. (Steve Grebin - Case No. 25-01S)

Motion by Heidenreich, Second by Presley, to Table Item to the April 1, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

B. Major Site Plan Review to Construct Parking Lot Improvements at Pine Bend Elementary School located at 9875 Inver Grove Trail. (Bolton & Menk - Case No. 25-03SP)

Reading of Public Notice

Secretary Presley read the Public Hearing Notice.

Presentation of Request

Planning Consultant Shay presented the staff report.

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The purpose of the parking lot expansion at Pine Bend Elementary School is to add additional bus parking and to modify traffic flow to minimize conflict between bus and parent pick up and drop off.

The site is zoned P, Public/Institutional District.

There will be no change to either access locations.

The South Parking area will provide 51 spaces (a decrease from 61 to allow for more bus parking spaces.) The North and East parking areas will provide 70 spaces (increase from 57).

The total parking spaces will increase by 3, from 118 to 121 spaces.

9 new overstory trees are proposed (existing trees will remain.)

Lighting will meet the requirement (less than one foot candle at the centerline of Inver Grove Trail).

Staff recommend approval of the Major Site Plan for parking lot expansion, subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Heidenreich inquired about an attachment provided in the staff report that may suggest planned water runoff into a part of the site that is listed as an Impaired Water/Wetland. Planning Consultant Shay stated that it will be discussed with the City Engineer who completed the stormwater review.

Opening of Public Hearing

Cole Larson, 3300 Fernbrook Lane North, Suite 300, Plymouth, Bolton & Menk, Inc., Applicant, stated that he received and read the staff report. He had no comments or questions.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Hunting stated that she sees the changes as an improvement to the site.

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that the stormwater drainage flowing into an area that is marked as National Wetlands and Impaired Water concerned him.

Chair Weber requested that the Engineer review the drainage plan before it goes before the City Council.

Motion by Hunting, Second by Wippermann, to Approve a Major Site Plan for parking lot expansions subject to the conditions listed in the staff report and the answering of the drainage question.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on March 24, 2025.

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C. Rezoning the Southern 4-acres from P, Public to B-3, General Business; and a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the land use designation for the Southern 4-acres from Public/Institutional to Commercial located at 7950 Blaine Avenue. (SMNPT 1, LLC - Case No. 25-02ZPA)

Reading of Public Notice

Secretary Presley read the Public Hearing Notice.

Motion by Teiken, Second by Heidenreich to add one email into the record.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

Presentation of Request

Planning Consultant Shay presented the staff report.

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment for this request would reguide the southern four acres of the property to Community Commercial (the church on the north half would remain Public/Institutional).

The Rezoning for this request is B-3, General Business to align with the Community Commercial land use request.

Development Concept (tentative)

- 3 commercial users
 - Gas station
 - Two retail stores with drive-through
- Parking/landscaping
- Proposed access onto Blaine for commercial uses shown

Relevant Policies to Consider

- Established Development Area Goals
 - provide convenient commercial services
 - provide buffers for density transitions
 - allow infill development
 - ensure new development is compatible in size and scale with existing adjacent neighborhoods
- Community Commercial Goals
 - provide goods and services that are needed by IGH residents in shopping nodes
 - encourage private sector redevelopment efforts

Staff Evaluation

- City Council has prioritized commercial growth in the area.
- The low-density residential area around the area to the north and east will be buffered by the church.
- The southern half of the site is currently vacant.
- 80th Street and Blaine Avenue are both major corridors, so this is an appropriate area for commercial development.
- The topography of the site means that the development will be below the church and the homes to the east, so it will be largely out of view.

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Next Steps

- Recommendation on Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Rezoning requests
- Future Actions
 - Preliminary Plat (public hearing required)
 - Final Plat
 - Conditional Use Permit (public hearing required)

Staff recommend approving the Comprehensive Plan Amendment from Public to Community Commercial and the Rezoning from P, Public to B-3, General Business, subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Wippermann questioned if this change would be considered spot zoning. Planning Consultant Shay stated that it would not be, as the request is consistent with the guided land use.

Commissioner Hunting inquired as to the difference between the B-2 and B-3 zoning districts. Planning Consultant Shay stated that it is a difference of scale; B-2 is for less intense commercial operations and has more restrictive standards. Both the B-2 and B-3 zoning districts could meet land use designations for Community Commercial.

Commissioner Hunting inquired about Neighborhood Commercial versus Community Commercial. Planning Consultant Shay explained that Neighborhood Commercial would limit the uses for the zoning district (e.g., no gas stations allowed in B-1). The applicant's desired uses for the site fit with Community Commercial.

Opening of Public Hearing

John Johansson, 11985 Technology Drive, Suite 110, Eden Prairie, SMNPT 1, LLC, Applicant, stated that he has been involved with similar projects to this one in the past.

William Haworth, 5417 Brewer Lane, Grace Nazarene Church, stated that the church is remodeling to create a daycare that will serve the community. To cover the costs of remodeling, the church decided to sell the land to the south of the church.

John Johansson stated that the parking lot to the south of the church will be replaced with one to the east, and will drain to a catchbasin, then to a pond that will be created to the south. The added entry point to the east would alleviate potential challenges from very different shared uses. This is a busy corner, surrounded by schools, a community center, a community college, etc. and would be successful for the uses. Chipotle is a likely user for the site. Bulk of traffic will come from 80th Street.

Alex Bruns, 2406 Blueberry Street, stated that his house near the north end of the property would not be buffered by the church. He reminded Commissioners about their comments on this project from 2023, citing concerns about needed Variances, traffic from Blaine Avenue, a change to the character of the neighborhood, and the lack of buffering. Blaine Avenue and 80th Street are busy intersections with existing traffic issues; he has been hit by cars several times in this intersection. He asserted that the church needs to retain a minimum of three acres of land, and with this proposed change, the church will take ownership of the retention pond. The church will thus bear the risk of owning the retention pond with runoff from gas station and parking lot. He said vacant land was not a bad thing. He said that currently, there are community gardens that provide a buffer zone. He said that the 2040 Plan emphasizes the importance of

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open space for connectivity, which would be negatively impacted by this proposal. He is concerned that the drainage would flow into his backyard, and he already has a sump pump that runs constantly. He said Inver Grove Heights did not need a gas station in the area. He said traffic concerns were not addressed in the proposal for this area from 2023, and they have still not been addressed. He said gasoline demand will be decreasing in the future. He asked what had changed in terms of code issues from 2023.

Donald Nerka, 7935 Blanchard Way, lives east of the area in the proposal. He said that he anticipates traffic problems. He said he has lived in the neighborhood for 35 years. He said he is not against development, but he doesn't think it belongs in the area. He cited traffic concerns and said there was no need for a gas station.

Planning Commission Discussion

Chair Weber stated that the acreage is appropriate, but he has a concern with the drainage not being kept on site.

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that he was not concerned about the drainage flowing to the south and east to be recaptured. He pointed out that there may not end up being a gas station on the site. He said this land should be developed. He said he agrees with the proposed land use.

Commissioner Hunting disagrees with the proposed land use and that B-3 does not protect the character of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that this does not seem to be infill development that protects the character of the neighborhood, which is single-family homes and would not support changing the zoning to B-3.

Commissioner Teiken stated that he supported the housing proposal from 2023, and still believes that this is a perfect site for more housing rather than commercial development. He does not feel that the proposal is right for the area.

Chair Weber stated that the previous proposal for this site was for high-density residential, and that was voted down. He said that B-3 is allowed for many possible uses. He asked the Commission to consider just the zoning of B-3 or Public/Institutional.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that B-3 zoning was designed to attract people from outside of the neighborhood. She said that this was in conflict with the Established Development Area policies on infill development.

Commissioner Wippermann stated that he still views this as spot zoning. He said the Commission turned down a high-density housing proposal, but it has not turned down senior housing or other residential project options. He said he was not in favor of the proposal.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that a low- or medium-density residential proposal would be welcomed, particularly for single-family homes.

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that the community college nearby and the noisy highway to the west make this site ideal for commercial development. He said this proposal would provide the church with needed funds to improve their property. He said the land being green space is not the best choice for the area.

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Motion by Hunting, Second by Teiken, to Deny the request for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment from P, Public/Institutional to CC, Community Commercial and the Rezoning from P, Public/Institutional to B-3, General Business.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 2 (Weber, Heidenreich) Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on March 24, 2025.

D. Rezoning from A, Agricultural to R-3A, Multiple-Family Residential; and a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to re-guide the northern portion of PID No. 20-00600-52-011 from MDR, Medium Density Residential to LMDR, Low-Medium Density Residential and re-guide PID No. 20-00600-25-012 from O, Office to LMDR, Low-Medium Density Residential. (Ace Land Holdings, LLC - Case No. 25-04ZPA)

Reading of Public Notice

Secretary Presley read the Public Hearing Notice.

Presentation of Request

Planning Consultant Shay presented the staff report on the proposed development located at Argenta Boulevard and 65th Street West, involving two properties, a small 2.5-acre parcel and a 21.4-acre parcel (which includes a wetland).

The proposal is to reguide the portions of the parcels that are currently guided as Office and MDR, Medium-Density Residential to LMDR, Low-Medium Density Residential so that the entire site is guided Low-Medium Density Residential.

The current zoning is A, Agricultural, and the proposed R-3A, Multiple Family Residential zoning would correspond with the Low-Medium Density Residential land use guidance.

This site is located in the Northwest Are Overlay District and the Shoreland Management Overlay District.

The development concept provides 119 rowhome/townhome units, with an estimated density of 5.8 units per acre. There would be a playground and clubhouse on site. The access would be on 65th Street and Argenta Boulevard.

Policies to Consider

- Future Development Area Goals
 - Encourage diverse housing styles
 - Establish a local street system
- Housing Goals
 - Maintain a balanced housing supply
 - Establish a housing pattern that respects the natural environment

Staff Evaluation

- The developed area around the proposed parcels has low-density housing; the proposal for low-medium density residential would be a compatible transitional use.
- The office land use parcel is disconnected from the larger office land use area by recent road extensions and realignments. Given this, guiding the land use of the Office parcel to match the land uses south of 65th Street is reasonable.

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Next Steps

- Recommendation on Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Rezoning requests
- Future Actions
 - Preliminary Plat (public hearing required)
 - Final Plat (Development Agreement)
 - Conditional Use Permit (public hearing required)

Opening of Public Hearing

David Stofer, 6060 Strawberry Lane, Shorewood, Ace Land Holdings, LLC, Applicant, stated that he had read and understood the staff report. Mr. Stofer stated that there is currently very limited access to the Office parcel. The goal is to create a community feel, which is behind the request for reguiding. The retention pond requirements take away from developable land.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Wippermann inquired if the development would be rental. Mr. Stofer confirmed that they would be but that the plan is tentative.

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that the proposal made sense for the area.

Commissioner Schaefer questioned whether it would be possible to add green space to provide for more play areas.

Chair Weber stated that the Shoreland Overlay would be the main limiting factor for green space because of the amount of water they will need to hold on site.

Motion by Heidenreich, Second by Teiken, to Approve the request for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment from O, Office and MDR, Medium Density Residential to LMDR, Low-Medium Density Residential and the Rezoning from A, Agricultural to R-3A, Multiple-Family Residential subject to the one condition listed in the staff report.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on March 24, 2025.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

None.

6. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Will Clashe, Recording Secretary.