



PLANNING COMMISSION SYNOPSIS

March 18, 2010

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairperson Klassen called the Planning Commission Study Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on March 18, 2010 in the McLeod Conference Room of the Bloomington Civic Plaza.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Nordstrom, Klassen, Willette, Fricke, Oleson, Marsh

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Baloga, Lucas, Felkner

STAFF PRESENT: Hawbaker, Markegard, Hiller

ITEM 1

6:00 p.m.

CASE:	10000M-10
APPLICANT:	City of Bloomington
REQUEST:	Discuss Height Standards

APPEARING FOR THE APPLICANT:

Glen Markegard, Senior Planner

DISCUSSION BY THE COMMISSION:

Markegard presented the staff report for Case 10000M-10 summarizing the existing height standards, staff concerns with the existing standards and past study meeting input from Council and the Commission. Markegard asked for input and comments regarding the height objectives and draft standards presented in the staff report.

Markegard stated staff has assembled draft objectives and standards that include: protecting single-family, two-family and townhome dwellings from significant shadows; better aligning height limits with resident and landowner expectations; providing opportunities for multi-story development in appropriate areas; adjusting standards to reflect past approvals for flexibility; and ensuring building heights step back from the street along streets with higher levels of pedestrian traffic.

Markegard stated staff proposes to amend the definition of “protected residential property” in the City Code as follows:

Protected residential property – Any property within the City that meets the following requirements:

- (A) The property is zoned R-1, R-1A, or RS-1 and the property may or may not also have a Planned Development (PD) Overlay classification;
- (B) The property is designated on the Comprehensive Plan as Low-Density Residential, Medium-Density Residential, or High Density Residential; and
- (C) The property is used or subdivided for use as single-family, two-family, townhome or rowhome residential uses.

Markegard asked for comments from the Commission regarding the proposed *protected residential property* definition. Marsh stated she feels strongly multi-family residential should be protected as well as single-family residential no matter what the density. Nordstrom, Klassen and Fricke stated they would like to see the definition amended in paragraph (B) to exclude High Density Residential and add the underlined text in paragraph (C) as shown in the staff report.

Markegard asked the Commission for input regarding the proposed district based approach toward structure height limitation as presented in the staff report. Marsh stated she feels the proposed multi-family height limit of 4 stories is too tall and should be more conservative. She also stated she feels development at the 90th Street/Penn Avenue intersection should be limited to two stories to protect the multi-family residential located near the intersection. Klassen commented he supports the district approach as it defines what development is wanted and the height expectations and feels that development with height is better than no development and that allowing more height may be an incentive for redevelopment to occur. Fricke stated he supports the district based approach, but likes starting on the conservative side (like Marsh) since these standards are revisited approximately every 5 years. Marsh stated she is generally opposed to height near the Southtown Shopping Center area.

Markegard asked for input from the Commission regarding the proposed shadow standard as presented in the staff report. Marsh and Fricke expressed support for including language in the draft ordinance stating it is needed as it is a quality of life issue and would put Bloomington as a leader in this area. Nordstrom and Klassen were opposed to adding shadow language as it may give a false sense of security to landowners and developers since flexibility may be used by Council using the PD process. They stated a shadow study can be requested and accomplishes the same purpose so the shadow standard is unnecessary. Markegard stated having shadow standards would provide the City the ability to say “no” to a development proposal that has shadow issues whereas a shadow study would provide teeth only for discretionary approvals such as when an application for new development is accompanied by a rezoning, reguiding or variance request. Nordstrom stated if we are trying to give residents an expectation that has some validity to it, then there probably shouldn't be a shadow standard given the possibility for PD flexibility or variances.

Markegard asked for input regarding the proposed step back standard as presented in the staff report. Markegard cited some examples in the metro area where buildings incorporated step backs in their design. Markegard provided an example of how it might apply in the first phase of development in the Penn American area and pointed out that is is difficult to create a step back standard that applies universally given the variety of site specific circumstances. Oleson asked staff if there are other driving concerns pushing this standard besides what is written in the staff report. Markegard stated the main intents of the standard are to maintain a pedestrian scale and character and to a lesser extent minimize the impacts of shadows and minimize the impacts of wind currents. Fricke stated he felt the language was over-reaching and over-legislating and is unnecessary for most of Bloomington as it relates more appropriately to a downtown area. He also stated over regulating may discourage developers from participating in the City's districts such as Penn American as those districts already have standards. Marsh stated she feels what is important is the building setback from the sidewalk as that gives a pedestrian a more open feel rather than step backs above the ground level. Nordstrom stated the step back language may be too restrictive to developers as they are trying to maximize density. Klassen stated step back standards may have more of an application in Bloomington if there actually was a “downtown”. He stated this issue could be revisited in ten to twenty years when the City may have a more appropriate area in mind. Marsh stated building step backs add to the aesthetics of the building, but also add costs to the development of the building.
