

Mt. Pleasant Planning Commission
Minutes of Work Session
November 5, 2015

I. Roll Call:

Present: Cotter, Dailey, Driessnack, Friedrich, Horgan, Irwin, Kostrzewa, Ranzenberger.

Absent: Hoenig

Staff: Kain, Murphy

II. Kain explained that the PC would not be asked to take any action during the work session; however there are two items that he would like to have some discussion on to get the Board's thoughts and impressions.

A. Mission Redevelopment Overlay Zone (MROZ):

Kain provided some background on the Mission Overlay, which was established in 2009 to address deficiencies in the Zoning Ordinance in regards to developments in the C-3 Zoning District. The City Commission has asked the Planning Commission to look at three things:

1. Whether the ordinance should be amended to put some constraints on the percent of the redevelopment which should be residential versus commercial.
2. Whether limits should be placed on density of any residential units on Mission Street that abut residential properties.
3. Whether clarification is needed on the boundaries of the district.

Commissioner Horgan asked staff to explain the purpose of the overlay and if there were any incentives for developers choosing to develop under those standards vs. traditional C-3 zoning standards. Kain commented that the current ordinance doesn't require much in regards to aesthetics and doesn't fit the vision the city would like to go; as the setback requirements are fairly large, there is a high level of parking requirements, etc. and only office/retail type uses are allowed. The Overlay was a way of working towards something better and opens up opportunities for other uses, i.e., mixed uses. Commissioner Horgan commented that it would make more sense to change the code to reflect the direction the city would like to go.

In regards to incentives, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has provided some incentive funding to some projects that have chosen redevelopments under the MROZ for things such as connector streets, decorative fencing, etc. Commissioner Dailey commented that all properties within the TIFA district were eligible for DDA funds.

Discussion ensued on limitations of the MROZ and the questions posed by the City Commission.

Kain explained that because the MROZ is optional, and traditional zoning is typically an easier and more certain path for development, there is a disincentive to utilize the MROZ which results in undesirable development. The language is also complicated and cumbersome although for many projects the MROZ would be beneficial.

Current language is imprecise regarding the extent of the overlay zone. The board discussed rolling the good aspects of the overlay into updated C-3 district standards during the zoning ordinance

rewrite. The board discussed the need for nuance in that district to address unique contexts and adjacent uses within the district.

Commissioner Ranzenberger commented that he feels the reduced setbacks help with traffic calming, as was one of the goals. He also noted that he prefers the monument signage over the pylons.

Commissioner Driessnack commented on a project that he was involved in that went through the MROZ and the additional time and money that went towards the project. He spoke of the frustration of working with MDOT on easements and in hindsight, he commented that although the end result is nice, it was so cumbersome and expensive that they wouldn't choose to do another development under the current MROZ language.

Board consensus was that in order to achieve the vision of the MROZ the process must be easier, more predictable for all involved, and include the entire C-3 district.

Commissioner Driessnack commented that we want to be development friendly and having a clear ordinance creates predictability.

Commissioner Friedrich agreed that right now the MROZ is wide open with all the waiver options available to developers, which is not predictable for anyone.

Kain asked the Board to give some thought about what they would like to see; what they do and don't like in other communities; etc.

Commissioner Driessnack commented that for the short term, he is not in favor of constraining the percentage of residential or type of residential units. The board agreed that any discussion of use percentage would be best addressed during the zoning ordinance update.

B. Owner Occupied Incentive Program (OOIP):

Kain provided information from the OOIP program. Kain explained that since its inception in 2008, twelve buyers have received the incentive. To date, approximately \$60,000 of the initial budget of \$100,000 has been expended. Kain provided maps showing all the rental properties in Mt. Pleasant, the change in rental licenses during the period 2009-2014, and a comparison of how Mt. Pleasant compares with peer communities around the state. Kain also provided results of a survey that was sent to the recipients of the program.

Commissioner Driessnack questioned what the goal of the program is and if it isn't achieving it, why continue it. Kain noted that there isn't a clear record of the discussions during the inception of the program but that the program does target owner-occupancy in a defined area of the City. Within the program area, the number of licenses issued and deleted is virtually identical, which is similar to trends citywide during the period.

Chairman Cotter questioned the benefit to the City in converting single-family rentals to single-family owner-occupied housing. Chairman Cotter suggested that incenting the conversion of non-conforming properties, such as rooming and boarding dwellings, would be a better focus for the program and accomplish more for the City.

Commissioners Horgan and Driessnack agreed, with Commissioner Driessnack commenting that if the pool of eligible properties was narrower, the incentive could possibly be increased.

Commissioner Dailey commented he feels this was developed as a "feel good" program; however most of the incentives are only a "burp" in the price of the house.

Commission consensus was if the program were to continue the focus should narrow. Kain noted that he will be passing along an update on the program to the City Commission along with the input provided by the Planning Commission for their consideration.

Work session adjourned at 9:10 p.m.