

City of Northville

City Council and Planning Commission

Joint Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2014

Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the City of Northville Municipal Building, City Council Chambers, 215 W. Main Street, Northville, Michigan, 48167.

City Council: Mayor Christopher Johnson, Mayor Pro Tem James Allen, Councilmembers Nancy Darga, Sam Ekong, Ryan McKindles

Planning Commission: Chairperson Jay Wendt, Anne Smith, Marc Russell, Steve Kirk, Jeff Snyder

Absent: Planning Commissioners Matthew Mowers, Dave Mielock, Carol Maise

Also Present: City Manager Patrick Sullivan, City Clerk Dianne Massa, Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Lori Ward, Planning Consultant Don Wortman, members of the Joint Master Plan Update Review Committee, reporter from the Northville Record, approximately 5 citizens

The purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for City Council and Planning Commission members to discuss the proposed Master Plan Updates.

On November 4, 2014, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Master Plan updates. However, the Planning Commission postponed adoption of the Master Plan pending the joint meeting and discussion with City Council, including questions on the Master Plan as it relates to the Cady Street Overlay and issues pertaining to future land use and/or building height.

The Planning Commission Chairperson briefly reviewed the Master Plan Update process that has occurred over the past 13 months. The Planning Consultant reviewed the draft development process. He also spoke of the proposed sub-area plans included in the Master Plan, with the focus on the Cady Town/Cady Street Sub-Area, South Center Street Sub-Area, Racetrack Sub-Area, and the Cady Street Overlay District Boundary as follows:

Cady Town/Cady Street Sub-Area:

- Opportunities include vacant properties, underutilized buildings, strategic location, historic structures
- Preferred land use: Mixed Use / Planned Development
- Form-Based Policies:
 - Obtain 10 ft. right-of-way
 - Height governed by height overlay
 - Maintain “build to” line
 - First floor architecture compatible with sidewalk areas
- Street configuration block grid pattern; re-align Cady Street
- Screen parking – located in rear
- Pedestrian amenities (walkways, plazas) and connection with downtown and along river

- Extend City streetscape treatments

South Center Street Sub-Area

- Opportunities include strategic location, acreage under single ownership, City gateway
- Preferred land use: Mixed Use / Planned Development / Residential
- Form-Based Policies:
 - Height governed by height overlay
 - Front setbacks 10-20 feet
 - High quality architecture
- Screen parking – located in rear
- Sidewalks on both sides of road
- Extend streetscape improvements
- Future development sensitive to existing residential areas
- Develop City gateway at S. Center and Seven Mile Road
- Retain floodway as open space

Racetrack Sub-Area

- Opportunities include large, consolidated parcel under single ownership, Middle Rouge River
- Preferred land use: Residential / Planned Development
- Form-Based Policies:
 - Height governed by height overlay
 - Reflect traditional neighborhood characteristics
 - High quality architecture
 - First floor architecture compatible with sidewalk areas
 - Traffic calming devices for Beal Town
- Expose Middle Rouge River as linear park and trail
- Floodways retained as park
- Future development includes central square with pedestrian connections to Cady Street, Center Street, and downtown

The Planning Consultant also noted:

- Based on the Joint Committee Report, the Planning Commission focused on recommending mixed-use is restricted to the area adjacent to Cady and to the east along E. Main Street. The south portion of Northville Downs is designated as residential. Other types of uses could be explored.
- Height adjustments in the Racetrack area allow for multi-family residential uses.
- At the southerly section of the Racetrack area, two stories is the maximum.
- The floodplain map was added to the Master Plan as requested.
- Concern with the property costs should Northville Downs be sold. Property costs could reach \$11 sq. ft. A developer would recoup that cost with residential. The property values need to be competitive.
- The Planning Commission focused on the walkability of the City.
- Following the discussion, land use descriptions and height could be adjusted.

Discussion ensued pertaining to the southeast portion of the City, including the Northville Downs property, Cady Street, and adjoining areas.

Comments from City Council pertained to:

- Most of the Master Plan draft is exciting. The Planning Commission was commended for day-lighting the Middle Rouge River.

- Concern with over reliance on residential uses in the City at large. The tax base is 85% residential and uses a lot of resources (Police, water, sewer, recreation).
- Most of Northville Downs is in the floodplain. Some future developments might not be feasible or will need to be on “stilts” due to floodplain.
- Is four stories too limiting in a floodplain area? More stories and higher density would allow for more creative developments and on-site amenities. Topography and slope would allow for more stories farther south in the racetrack area.
- The need for flexibility in the Master Plan to address these issues and make the floodplain area attractive to potential developers.
- There is a critical shortage of senior housing – older age density is now the trend.
- What can be done in the Cady “spine” that would consider the best use of land, diversify the tax base, and consider including a balanced mix of light industrial, and research and development. These types of businesses want to be located in a downtown area.
- Discussion of comparison of square footage costs for property in the City, Northville Township, and other downtown areas. Northville property values will attract diverse uses.
- The Planning Commission was encouraged to include other potential amenities and diversity. Smaller style/higher density buildings might be more attractive to young adults and encourage them to stay in the area. Also examine more flexible land use arrangements.
- Discussion of form-based policies and form-based uses.
- Include allowable uses in the text, with the configuration left up to the developer. Likely many projects would be developed as a Planned Unit Development.

Comments from Planning Commission members pertained to:

- Some comments from City Council appear to be contradictory to what the public wanted as vetted during the Joint Committee meetings.
- The land areas in question are almost double the size of the downtown. Uncertainty the City could handle the higher density without conducting a study on how this might affect the Police Department, traffic, and infrastructure.
- Development is about supply and demand.
- Caution voiced on trying to compete with other downtowns (i.e. Royal Oak).
- More discussion at the Planning Commission level needed to discuss economics of developing in a floodplain.

Comments from Joint Committee members included:

- Without proper studies, it is a guess of what the City wants.
- Consider doing a target market analysis study. Research grant programs that partner with other downtowns to fund these studies.
- Mixed use in these areas could be viewed as a threat to the downtown merchants. Let the downtown continue to be the retail hub.
- Older people want to downsize, and residential to accommodate that desire is needed.
- Young people are seeking a place to live that also offers something to do in the evening.

As the regular City Council meeting was scheduled to begin at 7:30 pm, the Mayor noted that discussion pertaining to the Cady Street Overlay District would continue during the portion of the City Council meeting pertaining to the first reading of the proposed Cady Street Overlay zoning ordinance amendment.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Adjournment: 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Massa, CMC
City Clerk

Christopher J. Johnson
Mayor

Approved as submitted: 12/15/14