

Plan Commission Minutes
October 11, 2021
Approved October 25, 2021

Minutes
City of Monona
Plan Commission
Monday October 11, 2021

The meeting of the City of Monona Plan Commission was called to order (7:03 pm).

Present: Alder Nancy Moore (Chair), Alder Kristie Goforth, Mr. Chris Homburg, Ms. Coreen Fallat, Mr. Robert Stein, Mr. Patrick DePula, Ms. Susan Fox, Mr. Brian Holmquist

Also Present: Doug Plowman, City Planner, Elisa Guerrero, Planning Intern

Approval of Minutes

A motion by Alder Goforth, seconded by Mr. DePula, to approve the minutes of September 27, 2021 carried with no corrections.

Appearances

Mr. Plowman shared public comments that were submitted via email:

Deb Whitehorse (1200 E Broadway), registered against the Northpointe proposal. She felt that the development would increase crime rates around the gas station. She also commented about the isolation of the site.

Ann Raschein (112 E Winnequah Rd), registered in favor of the Northpointe proposal, citing the need for affordable housing in Monona.

Mary C. Delaney (5108 Mesa Rd), registered in favor of the Northpointe development, saying that Monona was in dire need of more affordable housing options.

Dan Chitak (5108 Mesa Rd), registered in support of the Northpointe proposal.

Keenan Fonner (5509 McKenna Rd), registered in support of the Northpointe proposal because it was an opportunity to address housing affordability in Monona.

Clint Keaveny (4909 Wallace Ave), registered in support of the Northpointe proposal saying it would be a welcome addition to the community.

Daniel Bertelson (Business Owner at 5320 Monona Drive) spoke in favor of the Northpointe proposal. As a local real estate agent, he said that there is a need for more affordable housing in Monona that is accessible to younger families and professionals. He also said that many workplaces are downsizing and that commercial and retail space would not be as popular in the future.

Ruth Ann Whitehorse (5607 Chestnut Lane – McFarland), spoke in favor of the Northpointe proposal. She shared background on the previous proposal that came through for the Whitehorse property in 2014, saying that she felt the Commission had been overly critical of that proposal without giving a straightforward answer about whether they would support it. Eventually, the developers had to drop the project because it became cost prohibitive. She expressed concern that the City and Plan Commission were not truly in support of affordable housing in Monona. She also commented that the site had good pedestrian access to Ahuska Park, Pier 37 and other amenities, no different from the riverfront development.

Unfinished Business

A. Prehearing Conference on Request by Northpointe Development Corporation for Consideration of a Zoning Permit for New Construction and a New Use at 1208 E. Broadway. (Case No. 2-022-2021)

Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Manning gave an overview presentation of the proposed development called Broadway Lofts. Mr. Manning spoke about pedestrian access between the site and nearby amenities like Ahuska Park, Pier 37 and other businesses along East Broadway. Mr. O'Brien spoke about the site layout, including the outdoor spaces and additional parking. Building elevations were discussed for the 63-unit 4-story apartment building and two 6-unit pitched-roof townhomes. Sixty of the units on site would be workforce housing, with the other fifteen units rented at market rates. The buildings would have a gray and blue color scheme and the landscaping plan would cover 4 times as many points as required by code. The buildings on site would pursue Wisconsin Green Built Homes Certification and a couple of EPA certifications as well. Dane County had already pledged \$1,250,000 in Affordable Housing Development Funds for the project. They also showed some examples of similar developments along the Beltline, like The Urbana on Odana Road in Madison.

Mr. Stein liked the details of the project, including the affordability and some of the walkability of the site, but still had reservations about the location's isolation from other residential areas. He pointed to the future land use map of the Comprehensive Plan, which shows the area as commercial, and spoke to the need for having compatible adjacent uses for the development, which are currently missing. He felt that there were very few other developments like this in the area and was concerned about the future precedent that this could set for approving residential developments in commercial areas.

Mr. Holmquist said that if land use and zoning were not a consideration, then he would support the project, but that he was also concerned about the site's isolation. He appreciated the applicant's giving the example of the apartments on Odana Road for context. He also commented that this was workforce housing, not true affordable housing and that the proposed rents would still be expensive, even for college-educated young professionals.

Mr. DePula pointed out that of the 500 or so apartments that Monona has built in the past 10 years, none of them have been affordable units. He said that while this would have been a great project for the Riverfront space, it still had the possibility to be a good project for this location. Approving this development could be a concrete way for the City to address housing needs and work towards its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) goals. He commented that there was a lot of vacant commercial space now, which should be a consideration when discussing future land uses for Monona.

Ms. Fallat acknowledged the future land use map and Comprehensive Plan but said that trends in demand for housing versus commercial space are changing and that the Commission's decision should not be solely based on those documents. She said that this project could help address housing affordability and would be a step towards the Comprehensive Plan goal of supporting a workforce in Monona. She agreed that the project would be a good step in support of the City's DEI goals, and that there was potential for other development in the area that could reduce the isolation of the site. She felt that a strong commitment to connecting the site to nearby amenities would be crucial for the project's success.

Ms. Fox said this proposal provides an opportunity for more people to move to Monona. She agreed that a different location would be better for the project, but said that there was no other location available and that the Commission had a responsibility to promote affordable housing, as Mr. DePula said. She said that the development would be a plus from the

perspective of the school board, to have more families and children in the district. She agreed that it was important to make concrete efforts related to the City's DEI goals. She worried that the site had insufficient connections to public transit.

Mr. Homburg felt that approving this development would be spot zoning, allowing residential in the middle of a commercial area, and was concerned about the site's isolation. He said that the land use maps designated this area as commercial uses for a good reason and that the 75 units proposed would not create a neighborhood on their own. He emphasized the importance of a strong commercial tax base for the City and advised caution when thinking about lots of mixed-use or residential development along East Broadway. He said that if the Commission voted in favor of the project, he would work to provide constructive feedback about the project plans. He commented on the building materials and the landscaping plan.

Alder Goforth expressed support for the project, saying it could be a catalyst for the area the way Treysta/Yahara Terrace was for that portion of West Broadway. She felt the site had good connectivity to nearby businesses and would be a good location for another B-Cycle station. She agreed with other Commission members that building more affordable housing in Monona was important for building community and promoting inclusivity.

Alder Moore said that it was important to recognize that residential development could look different from the traditional single-family lots that are prevalent in Monona and often inaccessible to many. Reconsidering what a desirable living environment means to different people would be an important step in making the community more inclusive. She agreed that the development could be a catalyst and would be an actionable step towards a more affordable housing market. She echoed Ms. Fox's comments about a more desirable location for the project not being available.

Many of the Commissioners acknowledged Ms. Deb Whitehorse's comments about safety on the site, saying that the development would likely improve safety, given there would be more people around. Alder Moore shared comments from the Police Chief who said that the Shell gas station next to the site saw no more activity than the Kwik Trip on Monona Drive.

New Business

A. Public Hearing on Request by Walmart, Represented by SGA Design Group for Approval of a Zoning Permit for Order Pickup Modifications and Store Renovations at 2151 Royal Avenue. (Case No. 2-025-2021)

Ms. Bougher, from SGA Design Group, presented the plans to update the exterior paint colors on Walmart's building and move the online order pick up space to the western surface lot. The building's exterior will be repainted in gray tones with blue sign bands. One row of parking stalls will be restriped to be 12ft stalls with signage to mark the pickup area. A striped walkway between the building and lot will be added for employees fulfilling orders. The new area will allow for up to 1,000 pickup orders each day, to accommodate the over 90% increase in online orders that Walmart has experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

B. Consideration of Action on Request by Walmart, Represented by SGA Design Group for Approval of a Zoning Permit for Order Pickup Modifications and Store Renovations at 2151 Royal Avenue. (Case No. 2-025-2021)

Mr. Plowman shared the staff report, commenting that the reduction in parking stalls would not affect the overall parking needs of the site. The walkway would lead to a new service door on the west side of the building installed specifically to fulfil online orders.

The Commission members thought the updates and new order pickup area were a good project for the site. Mr. Homburg and Mr. Stein said the tree islands in the parking lot should be updated, since the existing trees are missing or in poor condition.

A motion was made by Ms. Fallat, seconded by Mr. DePula, to approve a Zoning Permit for Order Pickup Modifications and Store Renovations at 2151 Royal Avenue, as proposed and according to Chapter 480-55 of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances with the following conditions of approval:

Conditions of Approval:

1. All required building permits from state and local agencies shall be obtained.
2. A separate sign permit shall be obtained from the Plan Commission for any new signage on the site.

The motion carried unanimously.

C. Public Hearing on Request by Walmart, Represented by SGA Design Group for New Signage at 2151 Royal Avenue. (Case No. S-020-2021)

Ms. Bougher presented the proposed signage changes on the Walmart site for consistency with Walmart's updated branding. The new signs were almost replicas of the existing signs with slight changes to size and font. There would be an overall reduction in the square footage of signs on the building. The wall signs were all individual channel letters, and some would be internally illuminated. Additionally, directional signage would be added to the order pickup stalls, designating each with a number and showing the phone number to call for orders.

D. Consideration of Action on Request by Walmart, Represented by SGA Design Group for New Signage at 2151 Royal Avenue. (Case No. S-020-2021)

Mr. Plowman shared the staff report and said that there was a Comprehensive Sign Plan for the site. The proposed wall signs followed the CSP, but the onsite directional signs were a departure from the CSP, thus requiring Plan Commission approval. The proposal also included a temporary banner note within the plans.

The Commission felt that the updated signage was a good proposal. Mr. Holmquist liked the new blue paint color for the sign bands. Mr. Stein and Alder Goforth commented that the temporary banner would not be a problem.

Ms. Fox, Ms. Fallat, and Mr. Homburg commented that the on-site directional signage pick-up stalls seemed unnecessarily large. Mr. Homburg suggested that the signs for individual stalls be reduced to four feet tall and the signs be scaled down appropriately. Ms. Fallat also wondered what the purpose of the number signs above the auto bays was.

A motion was made by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Alder Goforth, to approve the request by Walmart for new wall signs and new on-site directional signage, to be located at 2151 Royal Avenue, as proposed, and according to Chapter 480 Article XII of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances with the following finding of fact and conditions of approval:

Finding of Fact:

1. The proposed signage is a reduction based upon previous approvals. The reduction, in conjunction with the scale of the store allows for an exception to the City's Sign Code for total sign area.

Conditions of Approval:

1. As the sign is to be illuminated, an electrical permit shall be obtained from the City's Building Inspector.
2. If glare from the lighting is deemed excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.
3. Final location of the three directional signs should be shown on plans prior to installation with approval by City Staff.
4. The on-site directional signage shall be limited to a maximum of 4 feet tall.
5. The applicant shall investigate the necessity of the numbering above the auto bay doors, with final approval by City Staff.

The motion carried unanimously.

E. Public Hearing on Request by RMR Financial, Represented by La Crosse Sign Group for New Signage at 400 Interlake Drive. (Case No. S-021-2021)

Mr. Bill Rupp, a representative from La Crosse Sign Group, said he was available to answer questions about the application.

F. Consideration of Action on Request by RMR Financial, Represented by La Crosse Sign Group for New Signage at 400 Interlake Drive. (Case No. S-021-2021)

Mr. Plowman shared the staff report, saying that the Commission may want to discuss whether the southern face of the building counts as frontage for the building. He mentioned that the building's dimensions were challenging to measure and that there was a wall sign for the other building tenant, in addition to a landscape ground sign.

Mr. Homburg, Ms. Fallat, Ms. Fox, Mr. Stein and Mr. Holmquist said that the sign was too big and should be reduced to 32 square feet, in line with the building's frontage on that face. They felt that the sign was designed to be visible from the Beltline, which would not be the intent of the sign code. Alder Goforth said the size of the sign was fine and had no issue with it as proposed.

A motion was made by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Mr. Holmquist to approve the request by RMR Wealth Advisors for one new Wall Sign, to be located at 400 Interlake Drive, as proposed, and according to Chapter 480 Article XII of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances with the following finding of fact and conditions of approval:

Finding of Fact:

1. 400 Interlake Drive fronts both Interlake Drive and the main channel of the Yahara River allowing an additional wall sign to be approved.

Conditions of Approval:

Plan Commission Minutes

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1. As the sign is to be illuminated, an electrical permit shall be obtained from the City's Building Inspector.
2. If glare from the lighting is deemed excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.
3. The sign shall be revised to have a maximum size of 32 square feet with final approval by City Staff.

The motion carried 7-1 (Alder Goforth voted nay).

Reports of Staff and Commission Members

A. Staff Report Regarding Status of Development Project Proposals.

1. Economic Development Update

Mr. Plowman shared that another application had come forward for the Main Street Bounce Back grant.

2. Potential Upcoming Plan Commission Items

Mr. Plowman said that there were likely two zoning permits for smaller uses on River Place and Monona Drive. For the upcoming meetings in November he expects both the Chipotle development and One City Schools traffic management to be on the agenda.

3. Updates/Discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts

Alder Goforth shared that the City held a ceremony to raise the Ho-Chunk Nation flag at City Hall in honor of Indigenous People's Day that was well attended despite the rain.

4. Upcoming Meetings: October 25, 2021 and November 8, 2021.

B. Plan Commission Requests for Information from City Staff.

Ms. Fallat asked if staff could prepare information on population data based on the most recent Census data, as well as housing information such as the number of apartment units built. Mr. Homburg agreed and added that information about neighboring communities would also be helpful.

Alder Moore mentioned that the Current II was close to being completed and would likely be leasing apartments starting by the end of the year.

Adjournment

A motion by Mr. DePula, seconded by Ms. Fox, to adjourn carried. (9:30 pm)

Respectfully submitted by:
Elisa Guerrero, City Planning Intern