



**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 5, 2025
6:30 PM**

North St. Paul City Hall – Council Chambers
2400 Margaret Street

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Blee called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

COMMISSION

Patrick Blee, Chair
Andrew Wise, Vice-Chair
Arthur Alvarez, Jr., Commissioner
Stephanie Kane-Burback, Commissioner
Elizabeth Gadbois, Commissioner
Cameron Muhic, Commissioner
Jim Rathe, Commissioner

STAFF/LIAISONS

Jason Nordby, City Council Liaison
Ken Roberts, Community Development Director

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Blee asked for a motion to adopt the June 5, 2025 meeting agenda.
M/Rathe, S/Wise.
Motion carried 7-0.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of April 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Blee asked for a motion to approve the April 3, 2025 meeting minutes.
M/Muhic, S/Rathe.
Motion carried 7-0.

B. Approval of May 1, 2025 Workshop Meeting Minutes

Blee asked for a motion to approve the May 1, 2025 workshop meeting minutes.
M/Wise, S/Gadbois.
Motion carried 7-0.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public comments.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings.

VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS, ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map Amendments

Roberts presented the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map Amendments item to the Planning Commission. The staff report identifies two areas along 7th Ave E and South Avenue east of McKnight Road N for which the City should consider amending the Future Land Use designation in the Comprehensive Plan and the official Zoning Map. Roberts provided background on previous Planning Commission discussions regarding inconsistencies between the Zoning Map and Future Land Use Map.

All properties are designated in the Zoning Map and Comprehensive Plan as MU-3: Corridor Mixed-Use, but all the lots have existing single-family dwellings except for two vacant lots. The MU-3 Zoning District does not allow single-family homes. All the homes within this subject area exist as legal nonconforming uses. Staff propose a rezoning from MU-3: Corridor Mixed-Use to R-2: Mixed Residential.

Alvarez noted that these proposed changes are to align official city plans with what exists in reality. Muhic asked if a developer were to purchase several properties, what would they be able to do by right with the zoning designation changes. Roberts stated the Comprehensive Plan would allow townhomes at a density of 6-12 units per acre. The zoning allows single family homes and townhouses. If someone acquired all the properties and tried to build a large apartment building, there would need to be additional zoning map amendments. Muhic and Brees indicated that they do not see a problem with the proposed amendments. The advantage of moving forward with the amendments is that it allows the current homeowners in the subject area to have more flexibility.

Wise stated he hesitates to lower the zoning because 7th Ave E is a main corridor. The homes in those parcels are older homes. Those types of things would be attractive to someone looking to propose a denser project. By proceeding with the rezoning, there would be an additional hurdle for a potential developer. Brees stated a denser residential project would likely fall under the Planned Unit Development (PUD) umbrella.

The Planning Commission reached a consensus to proceed with this task.

B. Zoning Ordinance Update – Home Occupations

Roberts presented the Home Occupation Ordinance update item. The first few pages in the staff report are the existing ordinance language and comments regarding issues that could and should be changed with an updated ordinance. Based on staff research and comments, staff have proposed several amendments to the sections of the City Code regarding Home Occupations.

The most substantial changes in the new draft ordinance for home occupations include the creation of a defined Level 3 home occupation and the clarification of home occupations that are Level 1 and 2. The Level 1 home occupations are those that have no visible neighborhood impacts. Level 2 home occupations are those that have no potential neighborhood impacts except for signage, customer visits and parking areas.

Gadbois recommended the removal of foster care from the ordinance as the city does not regulate this. Brees asked if there is a permit or license required for existing home occupations. Roberts stated that the current ordinance indicates that there is no licensure or permits for Level

1 home occupations, but it does exist for Level 2 home occupations. In the new draft ordinance, a permit is required for Level 2 and Level 3 home occupations, although Level 3 home occupations must be approved by City Council via an interim use permit. Muhic recommended the clarification of tutoring as allowed as a home occupation if there are “no more than two pupils” and amending that to say, “no more than two unrelated pupils”. The Planning Commission discussed the definition of an art studio and its designation as a Level 2 home occupation. Gadbois recommended making a distinction between art lessons and making your own art to sell. Bles stated if you are crafting a product that will be sold later, that would be treated differently than having customers coming to your home. Wise recommended changing the list of acceptable Level 2 home occupations to cover “onsite client retail.” The Commission asked staff to work on drafting clarifying language for Level 2 home occupations to umbrella all customer based home occupations and quantity of customers.

The Planning Commission discussed heating, plumbing and air-conditioning services home occupations being designated Level 3 and the possibility of it being a “home based professional” business that may be allowed as a Level 1 home occupation. Roberts clarified there are off-street parking regulations that would cover any trailers or trucks. Roberts also indicated there are possibilities of deliveries causing burdens and storage issues and also ride-alongs with other employees. The Planning Commission agreed that this type of business should continue as a Level 3 because there is the potential to impact neighboring properties.

Roberts indicated that contractors and small engine repair may need additional clarification in the home occupation ordinance. Bles recommended clarifying contractors as general construction contractors. The Commission directed staff to remove “contractors” and “small engine repair” but maintain the “building trades” portion of the ordinance. Kane-Burback recommended changing “family day care” to “in-home daycare” to be in line with current professional language.

Muhic stated that item xii, retail sales or distribution of products on the premises are prohibited, would be an issue for tailoring or beauty shops that sell products. Roberts stated that the ordinance indicates that this would be covered as long as they are occasional sales and incidental to and not the primary purpose of the home occupation. Roberts pointed out item x needing clarification as a property could be a dumping yard for the business and asked if the language needs changing. This item will be clarified to state “no exterior storage visible from the public street”.

Roberts stated that on page 3 of the ordinance there is a list of uses and activities not allowed as home occupations. Pet grooming or pet care facilities are on this list. The Commission recommended removing pet grooming from the list. Muhic asked if there should be any review on continuing nonconforming home occupations. Roberts indicated that would be complicated as the City does not keep track of private property sales. Nordby asked why firearm or ammunition sales/repair is on the list of not allowed. The Commission asked staff to clarify that state or federal licenses are required for firearm or ammunition sales/repair. Kane-Burback asked staff to look into pet boarding information in the existing zoning ordinance. Roberts stated he will try to get the revisions discussed at the meeting into an ordinance format for the Planning Commission to consider at their next meeting.

C. Subdivision Ordinance Update

Roberts presented the Subdivision Ordinance Update item to the Planning Commission. Roberts and the City Attorney have reviewed the ordinance and indicated that it is both outdated and confusing. The last major changes were made to the existing ordinance in 1999. The City Attorney noted three parts of the ordinance that they recommend the City update. First, they want to see a solid analysis of park dedication fees to make sure that they are consistent with recent

court rulings. Second, they would like to see more detail in the provisions requiring development contracts including requirements and terms imposed by a development contract. Third, the current code allows developers to post security in the form of a performance bond. The City Attorney indicated that now, the City should only allow security in the form of an Irrevocable Letter of Credit from a bank.

Staff recommend additional changes to the Subdivision Ordinance including:

- Adding a purpose section.
- Expanding and updating definitions.
- Adding language about the general provisions and administration of the Ordinance.
- Updating all references in the Code about the application submittal requirements.
- Adding clarifying language about the City process for reviewing lot consolidations and lot line adjustments.
- Revising the Code to allow City staff to approve simple lot divisions or lot splits rather than requiring Planning Commission review and City Council approval.

Muhic asked if it is a requirement to not use park dedication cash payments for ongoing operation or maintenance of parks, recreational facilities, playgrounds, trails, wetlands, or open space. Roberts stated that park dedication cash payments received must be used only for acquisition and development or improvement of parks, recreational facilities, playgrounds, trails, wetlands, or open space. Alvarez asked if an Irrevocable Letter of Credit is harder or easier to get than a performance bond. Roberts shared that his experience is that neither is easier or harder to get than the other. Roberts will bring this item back to the Planning Commission at an upcoming meeting for further review and discussion.

D. Downtown Design Manual Review

Roberts presented the Downtown Design Manual Review item to the Planning Commission. Included in the packet are additional former staff memos and a former proposed process/timeline. Roberts pointed out the west end of the historic downtown district (on 7th Ave E between North St. Paul Drive and Helen St N) and stated he questions whether the west end should be included as it is not historic in nature anymore. Roberts stated the original scope of the downtown design district was likely for the area around 7th Avenue and Margaret St N.

The Commission discussed various design guidelines in the Downtown Design Manual such as setbacks and height requirements. Roberts asked the Planning Commission what their priority is for the Downtown Design Manual. Blee indicated that the other items mentioned throughout the meeting are more of a priority, but it is important to have the Manual be right. Blee indicated it would be a good idea to have a consultant work on these updates next year. Muhic stated the east and west ends of the Downtown Design District should have a form-based code. The only truly historic parts of the town are the two blocks on either side of Margaret St N along 7th Ave E. Nordby asked staff to research if grants are available for the Manual update.

E. 2025-2026 Planning Commission Work Plan

Roberts presented the proposed Planning Commission Work Plan for 2025-2026. The Commission agreed that the Downtown Design Manual should move lower on the priority list, but the work plan will be helpful to balance priorities and stay on track.

VIII. REPORTS

A. July 3, 2025 Meeting

Due to the uncertainty of there being a quorum of Planning Commission members present at the July 3, 2025 meeting, staff will coordinate with members to cancel the regular meeting and schedule a special meeting on a different date.



Roberts stated he has been having conversations with a developer about a potential townhome project on South Ave E near the Maplewood border. The zoning of the lot is R-3: Multiple Family Residential. The developer is asking for City sponsorship via Metropolitan Council's Livable Communities Grant.

Nordby stated that there will be a presentation on the future of the Community Center on June 17, 2025 at 5:15 PM at City Hall.

Alvarez stated he is still researching definitions of townhouses, duplexes, and twin homes and will share as he learns more.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Blees asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 PM.

M/Rathe, S/Alvarez.

Motion carried 7-0.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, July 3, 2025 at 6:30 PM.

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

Chris Cherne
Planning Commission Secretary
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