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PLANNING COMMISSION-CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CITY OF LOWELL, MICHIGAN
AGENDA
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF
MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL
2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS
 - a. September 12, 2022 Regular Meeting
4. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA
5. OLD BUSINESS
 - a. None
6. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. 2022 Master Plan Review
7. STAFF REPORT
8. COMMISSIONERS REMARKS
9. ADJOURNMENT

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION-CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CITY OF LOWELL, MICHIGAN
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.**

1. **CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, ROLL CALL.**

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Bruce Barker.

Present: Commissioners Amanda Schrauben, Dave Cadwallader, Collin Plank, Michael Gadula, Tony Ellis and Chair Bruce Barker.

Absent: Commissioner Marty Chambers

Also Present: Andy Moore with William & Works via Zoom, Lowell City Clerk Sue Ullery.

2. **EXCUSE OF ABSENCE.**

IT WAS MOVED BY ELLIS and seconded by CADWALLADER to excuse the absence of Commissioner Marty Chambers.

YES: Commissioner Plank, Commissioner Cadwallader, Commissioner Schrauben, Commissioner Ellis, Commissioner Gadula and Chair Barker.

NO: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Chambers. MOTION CARRIED.

3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA.**

IT WAS MOVED BY CHAMBERS and seconded by CADWALLADER to approve the agenda as written.

YES: Commissioner Schrauben, Commissioner Ellis, Commissioner Chambers, Commissioner Cadwallader and Chair Barker.

NO: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Chambers. MOTION CARRIED.

4. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS.**

IT WAS MOVED BY CADWALLADER and seconded by ELLIS to approve minutes of the June 27, 2022 joint Special Meeting, and the August 08, 2022 regular meeting as written.

YES: Commissioner Ellis, Commissioner Plank, Commissioner Schrauben, Commissioner Gadula, Commissioner Cadwallader and Chair Barker.

NO: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Chambers. MOTION CARRIED.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA.**

There were no comments.

6. **OLD BUSINESS.**

There is no old business.

7. **NEW BUSINESS**

a.) **Public Hearing – Pro Seal Storage – 1251 Bowes Road.**

Chair Barker opened the Public Hearing.

Owner of Pro Seal, Dale Bibbler explained his purpose for the special land use at 1251 Bowes Rd stating he would like to store his equipment there and use the equipment during the day at various job sites and then bring the equipment back at night to store again. Bibbler is leasing the building.

Andy Moore with Williams & Works went through the background explaining the subject property is approximately 3 acres in area and is located within the C3 General Business district. The applicant is proposing to utilize the existing building on the property for a cold storage facility. The site is currently vacant except for the pole barn. There is a baseball field to the rear of the site, adjacent to Bowes Road, that is currently unused. Commercial storage warehouses are permitted in the C-3 district with special land use approval by the Planning Commission.

Then Moore reviewed the Special Land Use Review Standards A through F and found all are met.

Chair Barker asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

The Planning Commissioners also found that all the Special Land Use Review Standards A through F are met.

IT WAS MOVED BY CADWALLADER and seconded by PLANK to accept that the Special Land Use Review Standards A through F are met.

YES: Commissioners Chambers, Schrauben, Cadwallader, Ellis, Plank, Gadula and Chair Barker.

NO: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Chambers. MOTION CARRIED.

Moore then reviewed the Commercial Storage Warehouse Special Land Use Standards #1 through #4 and found that all the standards were met.

The Planning Commissioners also found that all the Commercial Storage Warehouse Special Land Use standards are met.

IT WAS MOVED BY GADULA and seconded by CADWALLADER that the Planning Commission accept that the Commercial Storage Warehouse Special Land Use Review Standards #1 through #4 are met.

YES: Commissioners Chambers, Schrauben, Cadwallader, Ellis, Plank, Gadula and Chair Barker.

NO: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Chambers. MOTION CARRIED.

Chair Barker closed the Public Hearing.

Based on the foregoing review and findings of facts, the proposed special land use and site plan is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to issuance of any City permits, the applicant shall have paid all application, permit, reimbursable escrow,

and other fees related to the request.

2. The applicant shall comply with any requirements from the Lowell Area Fire Department. City's Department of Public Works, City Engineer, MDOT, or other approving agencies.
3. The applicant shall continually comply with applicable ordinances, codes, and requirements of the City of Lowell.
4. The proposed special land use shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements, and copies of all applicable permits shall be submitted to the City.
5. Any exterior lighting shall comply with Section 4.24 of the Zoning Ordinance.
6. No outdoor storage shall be permitted with the exception of vehicle parking.
7. Access to the property shall only be from Main Street through 1250 West Main as specified in the applicants lease agreement. No access shall be taken from Bowes Road with the exception of personal vehicles.
8. The special land use shall become null and void upon the expiration or termination of the lease agreement.
9. Pro Seal & Equipment only access from Main Street through 1251 W Main St.

IT WAS MOVED BY BARKER and seconded by CADWALLADER that the Planning Commission approve the Special Land Use at 1251 Bowes Road for Pro Seal with the conditions listed above.

YES: Commissioners Chambers, Schrauben, Cadwallader, Ellis, Plank, Gadula and Chair Barker.

NO: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Chambers. MOTION CARRIED.

Dale Bibbler thanked Sue Ullery for all her help and stated that she made it a really easy to apply for the Special land use.

8. **STAFF REPORT.**

Moore stated the Master Plan is due for a 5-year plan to determine if it needs to be updated. He can provide an update in October.

9. **COMMISSIONERS REMARKS.**

Commissioner Cadwallader would like more boat docks put in. Moore stated it would be more of a Council discussion.

Commissioner Ellis asked about cleaning or making the river access more accessible to boats. Also stated he was just hired on the Fire Department and the City of Lowell was complimented in the meeting about their fire hydrants and the upkeep in the City.

10. **ADJOURNMENT.**

IT WAS MOVED BY CADWALLADER and seconded by GADULA to adjourn at 7:35 p.m.

DATE:

APPROVED:

Bruce Barker, Chair

Susan Ullery, Lowell City Clerk

MEMORANDUM

To: City of Lowell Planning Commission
Date: October 6, 2022
From: Andy Moore, AICP
RE: **2022 Master Plan Review**

The City of Lowell Master Plan is a broad policy document that articulates Lowell's vision for land use, development, redevelopment, and capital investment. It is a visionary document that states what the community desires to become, and it establishes a framework for achieving that vision through a series of specific strategies and tasks.

The existing City of Lowell Master Plan was adopted in late 2007. It was developed over several months and required significant work by City staff, Planning Commission, and elected officials. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, (Act 33 of 2008, as amended) requires that a Master Plan be "reviewed" every five years after adoption. The Planning Commission reviewed the Master Plan in 2012 and again in 2017, determining both times that the 2007 Plan was appropriate, so an update was not performed. At a minimum, a similar review is required in 2022.

The purpose of this memorandum is to review each chapter of the 2007 Master Plan to facilitate the Commission's review of the document. It is intended to aid in determining if changes to the Plan are needed. This memorandum is not intended to criticize existing policies or to find possible shortcomings in the document; rather, it highlights areas where changes could be appropriate to guide the Planning Commission's review.

Chapter 1. Demographics and Housing. A review of existing conditions is an important component of any long-range plan as it identifies current conditions and trends that are required to effectively plan for future changes in the City. In general, Chapter 1 of the 2007 Master Plan could be updated to include more recent data from the 2010 and 2020 Census.

As an example, 2010 Census data shows that the City's population decreased from its 2000 population of 4,013 to 3,783 in 2010, and then increased in 2020 to a population of 4,142. The City's 2010 median age increased from 34 in 2000 to 37.1, and in 2020 was estimated at 36.8 years. Additionally, the number of households decreased from 1,492 in 2000 to 1,457 in 2010, and increased to 1,585 (est.) as of 2020. The average household size decreased from 2.69 in 2000 to 2.50 in 2010, and remained similar in 2020 (2.53).

Some of these trends are common in small cities throughout Michigan and are reflective of a few larger national trends. First, as the "baby boomer" generation nears retirement age, and as young families have fewer children than their ancestors, the median age has been increasing in some communities while household sizes are generally decreasing. Additionally, the median

age of 36.8 years is similar to that of Kent County but lower than that of Vergennes Township (46 years). In our experience, smaller cities like Lowell tend to have a younger population compared to the surrounding rural townships.

Page 8 of the Master Plan lists several conclusions relative to the City's demographics and housing data. While much of the data on the preceding pages of the plan could be updated, the conclusions generally remain valid.

Chapter 2. Existing Conditions. This Chapter primarily addresses existing conditions in three general areas: (1) physical geography and land use, (2) public facilities and services, and (3) public input.

For the most part, the City's physical conditions have not changed appreciably since 2007. Land use patterns are generally the same (although there are several areas to update), and the City's physical geography in terms of wetlands, steep slopes, soils, and floodplains also has not changed much since 2007.

However, there may be some edits to make related to City services such as water, wastewater, LLP, cable, parks, etc. as it is likely that conditions have changed somewhat during the last 15 years. Obviously, no changes to the public survey summary would be made since that was a specific survey related to the 2007 Master Plan. An updated plan should include a new effort to garner public input and interest in 2022/23.

Chapter 3. Goals and Objectives. Goals and Objectives comprise the policy foundation of the Master Plan. More than any other section, Goals and Objectives state the community's vision for the long-term (20 – 30 years or more) and establish what the community desires. The 2007 Master Plan sets forth goals and policies related to growth and development, community image, land use, transportation, housing, and community services.

The Planning Commission should carefully review this Chapter and discuss whether or not these goals are still relevant, if they reflect the desires of the community, and/or if there are additional goals and/or objectives that should be included.

Chapter 4. Future Land Use. The Future Land Use plan of the City of Lowell is contained in Chapter 4. The future land use plan describes the City's neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. It also presents a future land use map that establishes the City's land use and zoning policy. Each designation on the future land use map is described in the chapter in terms of land use, density, and character. The future land use plan does not necessarily have to reflect the zoning map, but it should generally reflect land uses that are expected or desired to remain over the long term. However, as new development or redevelopment occurs, the City should refer to the future land use map to ensure that development is consistent with the Plan. The future land use map is frequently consulted when the City makes special land use and rezoning decisions, so its accuracy is very important in day-to-day zoning administration as well.

In reviewing the future land use map, we offer the following observations and suggestions:

- The boundary of the city's "Downtown" future land use designation should be reviewed. We question whether the design principles of the downtown can be feasibly carried west from Hudson Street to the railroad tracks.
- The two "mixed use" areas on West Main Street should be evaluated. While the flexibility that comes with a mixed use designation can be beneficial, in reality, the commercial value of Main Street frontage has overwhelmed any other uses, and the mixed use areas have essentially been developed as a continuation of the "Highway Business" designation.
- Some of the future land use designations could be consolidated into one. For example, "low density," "single family 1," and "private open space" could be consolidated, as could "park" and "public."
- The Attwood property should probably be changed to industrial.
- The "floodplain" designation should be reconsidered, as what is shown on the future land use map does not match the actual 100-year floodplain boundary. While much of the land in the "floodplain" designation is generally not developable due to its tendency to flood one or more times per year, there likely exists a better future land use category and/or way of illustrating the flood-prone characteristics of these lands.
- The "industrial" and "mixed use" areas on the west end of the city and along Bowes Road should be evaluated. Several of these properties are commercial and not likely to be converted to industrial uses.

In its review of the Master Plan, the Planning Commission should carefully study the future land use map and text and note whether or not it represents the desired development forms and long-range land use policy of the City.

Downtown Design Guidelines. Beginning on page 44, after the future land use map, there is a discussion related to urban design and how it affects a community. Many of these topics were utilized in the development of language for the Mixed Use zoning district that was enacted several years ago. There is also discussion relating to parking and energy-efficient development. In general, this section remains relevant and should be retained.

Chapter 5. Implementation. This chapter outlines several specific tasks that should be completed by the City and, if these tasks are completed, the vision outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 will be more likely to be realized. Of the tasks listed in this Chapter, several have been completed, as outlined below:

1. Adopt New Downtown Zoning Standards / Mixed Use Zoning District. A few years ago the City approved a new Mixed Use zoning district that enables a variety of land uses and requires building design consistent with the guidelines discussed in Chapter 4. However, there may be further steps needed to fully implement this task.

2. Landscaping, Parking and Lighting. Landscaping provisions were revised as part of the review of the zoning ordinance in 2017. Further, a parking study was completed in 2015/2016, and parking provisions were updated a few years ago.
3. Review the Master Plan. This has been done in accordance with the MPEA.
4. Review and Update the Parks and Recreation Plan. This was done in 2008, amended in 2012, updated in 2017, and is being drafted again in 2022/23.

The following items have not been addressed (to my knowledge):

1. Green Building Incentives.
2. Review of Site Condo and Subdivision Control Ordinances
3. Conditional Rezoning. (It should be noted that the Zoning Enabling Act allows for conditional rezoning presently, so this is a tool that can be used by a landowner in the City even if the Zoning Ordinance does not specifically address it. In my experience, however, it is an option rarely exercised by landowners).
4. We also note that the list of implementation strategies is not a particularly long list. If the plan were to be updated, a more robust list of actionable implementation steps would likely be warranted.

Conclusion. It is up to the Planning Commission to determine if the Master Plan should be updated in 2022/23, although it should seek agreement from the City Council. In several sections of the Plan, there is an opportunity to update the data and maps relating to demographics, housing, aging, city services, existing land use, and additional discussion topics could be added.

In our opinion, there is some benefit to an update of the 2007 Plan. It has been 15 years since the plan was adopted, and much has changed at the local, state, and national level. The long-range planning process would likely be beneficial to City staff and elected and appointed officials, as several city council and planning commission members have not yet had an opportunity to participate in a broad, community-based policymaking exercise such as a Master Plan. However, we also believe that most policies of the existing plan remain relevant and appropriate for the foreseeable future. If the city opts to update the plan, there are several portions of the 2007 plan that would be carried forward.

Most important is if the City feels that an update to the goals and objectives, future land use plan, and/or implementation strategies is warranted. If the Planning Commission and City Council believes so, then it may be appropriate to update the 2007 plan to present additional data, articulate additional policies, revise the future land use plan, and define additional strategies for implementation.

The city should also aware that an effort to update the Master Plan will likely be a 12-15 month process. It is a significant effort that will require a significant financial investment, likely in the range of \$30,000 - \$50,000, subject to the level of effort desired.

As always, please feel free to contact us if there are any questions.

2022				
Open Date	Close Date	Address	Name/Business	Subject
01/19/2022	01/19/2022	204 W. Main	Richard Craig	Remodel
04/06/2022	04/06/2022	825 Hunt Street	Angela Ingram	Re-roof
04/14/2022	04/19/2022	510 Kent Street	Ridgeline Construction	Deck
04/20/2022	04/21/2022	671 Birchwood Ct	Max Hilton Builders	Deck
04/21/2022	05/02/2022	755 Alden Nash	Dan Godinez	Shed
04/26/2022	05/10/2022	151 S. Center	Paul Dykema	New Home
05/10/2022	05/11/2022	506 Avery	Paul Schramm	Deck
05/17/2022	05/18/2022	1150 Sibley	Todd West	Basement Finish
06/08/2022	06/08/2022	2523 Gee Drive	Glen Groeneweg	Pool
06/13/2022	06/13/2022	249 Elizabeth Dean	Stacy VandenAkker	Roof
06/27/2022	06/27/2022	2111 W. Main	Tractor Supply	Inside Remodel
07/08/2022	07/08/2022	1300 Jane Ellen	Isaac Towner	Deck
07/19/2022	07/19/2022	2420 Gee Drive	John and Lori Gerard	Re-roof
08/03/2022	08/03/2022	1625 Sibley	Shane Chidester	Reside and Re-roof
08/10/2022	08/15/2022	147 N. Center	Straight Line Fence	Fence
08/19/2022	08/23/2022	429 N. Jefferson	Heidi Lynne	Renovation
08/17/2022	08/24/2022	421 N. Jefferson	Margaret Hoats	Pool demolition
09/08/2022	09/08/2022	901 W. Main	DCK Leasing	Parking lot replacement