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**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM  
PLANNING BOARD ACTION ITEMS  
OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2014**

Item	Page
No motions were made at this meeting.	

APPROVED

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**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING BOARD  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2014  
City Commission Room  
151 Martin Street, Birmingham, Michigan**

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Minutes of the regular meeting of the City of Birmingham Planning Board held January 22, 2014. Chairman Robin Boyle convened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

**Present:** Chairman Robin Boyle; Board Members Carroll DeWeese, Scott Clein, Gillian Lazar, Janelle Whipple-Boyce, Bryan Williams

**Absent:** Board Member Bert Koseck; Student Representative Arshon Afrakhteh

**Administration:** Matthew Baka, Sr. Planner  
Ken Cooper, Asst. Building Official  
Jana Ecker, Planning Director  
Bruce Johnson, Building Official  
Carole Salutes, Recording Secretary

**01-10-14**

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
HELD JANUARY 8, 2014**

**Motion by Mr. Clein**

**Seconded by Mr. DeWeese to accept the Minutes of the Regular Planning Board Meeting of January 8, 2014 as presented.**

**Motion carried, 6-0.**

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Clein, DeWeese, Boyle, Lazar, Whipple-Boyce, Williams

Nays: None

Absent: Koseck

**01-11-14**

**CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS**

The chairman noted a variety of issues will be looked at this evening.

**.01-12-14**

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA** (no change)

**01-13-14**

**PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSION**

**33801 Woodward Ave.** (former Neighborhood Hardware)

Ms. Ecker observed the City is in the midst of the S. Gateway Plan which hasn't been adopted yet. Mr. Roman Bonislowski, Ron & Roman Architects, was present with the property owner for the three sites, Mr. Duane Barbat. Mr. Bonislowski stated this is the first of three properties they are dealing with. He noted there are no zoning issues associated with this building. Illustrations were presented and Mr. Bonislowski indicated they intend to clean the building up and contemporize it in a big way by providing sparkle and utilizing greenery on the two side walls.

**01-14-14**

**PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSION**

**33558 Woodward Ave.** (former Citgo Gas Station)

Mr. Bonislowski showed an aerial photograph defining and outlining the existing property on the east side of Woodward Ave. at Chapin. They are looking for the opportunity to pursue an enclosed drive-thru situation for Dunkin Donuts. The site meets the parking requirements and has a good queuing lane for a drive-thru. They are able to provide additional parking spaces for employees off of the alley. The building is in the neighborhood of 2,500 to 3,200 sq. ft.

Chairman Boyle said the area from Lincoln on the north to Fourteen Mile Rd. has been of concern to this board and the City for quite a long time. The board has struggled with the nature and style of some of the new developments. Second, there is the challenge of parking and the impact it has on the neighborhood. Therefore the City has hired a consultant to do a study on this area to see what options are available for the properties. Meanwhile, development opportunities are coming in.

Ms. Ecker said the issue of the one story versus two is definitely a factor that the board must consider. They had talked in the charette about having the buildings run along Woodward Ave. to give more of a street wall, and not have the parking visible from Woodward Ave. Also they talked about buffers from the neighborhood.

Mr. Bonislowski noted they cannot meet the Master Plan for Woodward Ave. because the available parking doesn't support it. However they have a fallback, which is a gas station. Mr. Williams reiterated that based on their parking requirements, two-story buildings don't work because there isn't enough land available to achieve the intended result. Therefore, in his view the Master Plan is flawed. What this property has that many of the others don't have is parking adjacent to the building.

It was discussed that the parking standards may change. Presently they are based on the square footage of the use. For restaurants it is 1/75. Ms. Ecker added one of the

other things they talked about in the charette was drawing a hard line through the neighborhood so the residents would know where the commercial area stops.

Mr. Clein did not think the site plan works very well, particularly the M-Dot frontage. Driveways have to come out and be put back in properly. Also, the impact of the alley on the neighborhood has to be studied.

In response to Mr. DeWeese, Ms. Ecker clarified that incoming plans fall under the standards in force on the date of application.

Mr. Williams thought the board should ask Mr. Bonislowski to re-work the plan so the building fronts more on Woodward Ave. and drops out at Chapin. Chairman Boyle said that next time it would be great for the board to see a couple of alternative drawings. It was noted that an enclosed drive-thru seems to control noise to the neighborhood.

Mr. Barbat said it takes about ninety seconds to place an order and go through the drive-thru. Six cars can stack in the queue. He indicated they can get a total of twelve cars on the site without having to go onto Woodward Ave.

**01-15-14**

### **PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSION**

**33495 Woodward Ave.** (former Birmingham Imports)

Mr. Bonislowski once again provided an aerial photograph of the property. The existing building is legal in its current configuration. The issue is they are proposing to renovate it entirely because of the tenants they wish to bring in. The extent of the renovations will be based on the richness of the tenancies. Mr. DeWeese thought the safe thing to do is figure out how to fulfill the parking needs without intruding into the neighborhood. Ms. Whipple-Boyce said the only solution she can see is to reduce the parking requirement if the City wants to encourage two-story development.

Mr. Barbat thought the neighborhood might like to see an expanded parking lot to keep people from parking up and down their street. Mr. Clein noted at the end of the day, too little parking might hurt the performance from a leasing perspective and not let the project go forward.

Mr. Williams said the lesson here is to charge the consultants to pursue down-size parking requirements but also alternatives. The properties that are not visually appealing and not well maintained are the properties that don't have parking. Some other properties have intruded into the neighborhood in a haphazard way. Ms. Ecker insisted that a hard line is needed so that the neighbors know where commercial stops. Mr. Williams concluded that if the first house is taken out, the value of the second house property goes down and the City will be sued. His answer to the proposed development is not to include the house at the rear.

The board members agreed they should be re-visiting parking requirements.

Chairman Boyle summed up that the applicant has an opportunity to phase their investment and their development. The first proposal is ready to go because they are not changing any configuration. The second proposal needs some tweaking. But, the board wants to make a drive-thru fit because one has been done already. The third plan is a little tough because it hangs up against a lot of issues that it is hoped will be addressed by the consultants. Therefore, the applicant has a little bit of phasing to go forward. Mr. Williams concluded that any investment in this strip is appreciated.

**01-16-14**

## **STUDY SESSION**

### **Garage Front Houses**

Ms. Ecker advised it has come to the attention of the Planning Division that several issues have arisen with regards to the application of design standards for single-family homes with attached private garages. The Planning Board in the late 1990's drafted basic design standards to ensure that the front of single-family homes provided an inviting and pedestrian-oriented façade and connection to the sidewalk and the neighborhood.

However, over the years, creative design plans have been submitted to the City and approved for single-family homes with attached, private garages that protrude in front of the principal residential building on the site. This has been accomplished by adding a small conditioned living space (such as an office, tool room, exercise room, etc.) to the very front of the attached private garage facing the street, and/or building residential living space above the attached, private garages.

The Planning Division and the Building Division request that the Planning Board review and discuss some of the recently approved designs and determine if these creative garage front home designs are consistent with the intent of the standards drafted by a former Planning Board and contained in the Zoning Ordinance, as well as the vision for the development of the City. If they are not, the Planning Board may wish to consider amending the Zoning Ordinance.

The group viewed several examples. It was Ms. Whipple-Boyce's opinion that the board needs to come up with a way to tighten up the Ordinance language in order to bring things closer to the intent of getting the garage behind the house and moving the front door up to the street. Mr. Johnson felt that could be done by clarifying definitions.

Chairman Boyle cautioned the board has to be careful not to kill thoughtful, sophisticated design and construction just to impose their regulations.

Mr. Cooper said the reason for these designs is that the builders' customers want attached garages.

Chairman Boyle noticed in the examples shown that people have decided to use the front space in a way that isn't as conducive to the neighborhood because they want to

preserve their land at the rear. Mr. Cooper said garages are being designed in the front because by moving the garage to the rear, even though attached, a lot coverage issue comes into play and a lot more driveway is required.

Mr. Williams wasn't sure he agrees with the basic premise. He doesn't like the way some development is pushing detached garages as far back as possible, right up against the rear property owner's backyard.

Mr. DeWeese wanted to see some options along with their consequences for all types of lots.

The chairman invited comments from the public at 9:07 p.m.

Mr. J.C. Cataldo said that when he was part of the Planning Board they went through an exhaustive analysis of what was happening to the neighborhoods. They came to the conclusion that garages should not be the primary point of the home. He appreciates the board taking a look at the language again and thinks the neighborhoods will be a lot better off for it.

Ms. Ecker agreed that staff will come back with some solutions that show a little more context.

Chairman Boyle noted if too many rules and regulations are imposed the outcome will be cookie cutter designs.

**01-17-14**

**STUDY SESSION**  
**Action List**

Mr. Williams suggested that Mr. Baka take a shot at re-doing the list the way he thinks it ought to be and then bring the suggested prioritizations back to the board. It was agreed that board members should take a look at the list and e-mail everyone recommending what items might be added or taken out.

**01-18-14**

**STUDY SESSION**  
**Outdoor Storage**

The consensus was that it doesn't make sense to go forward with this matter until after Transitional Zoning has gone to the City Commission.

**01-19-14**

**STUDY SESSION**  
**Alleys and Passages**

Ms. Ecker noted that in 2012, the Planning Board and the City Commission approved the alley plan entitled Activating Urban Space: A Strategy for Alleys & Passages (“the Plan”). The first step taken by the City in implementing the Plan was the amendment of the Zoning Ordinance to add the Via Activation Overlay District to create design standards for alleys and passages and to clarify permitted uses in alleys and passages.

Page 23 of the Plan outlined an implementation strategy for alleys and passages. Thus far, the Planning Division has focused on implementing the following recommendations contained in Phase 1 of the Implementation Strategy chart:

- Identify and classify all alleys and passages - map and photo survey (completed).
- Document existing conditions - info sheet on each alley and passage (completed).
- Identify multi-modal connection opportunities within alleys and passages - integrate findings and connections into the Multi Modal Plan.
- Identify green strategies for alleys and passages - select a pilot section green alley project.
- Develop signage standards for alleys and passages – amendments to Sign & Zoning Ordinance.
- Incorporate public art into alleys and passages – encourage placement of public art.
- Improve wayfinding – create brand and select locations for alley and passage signage.

The Phase 1 implementation options listed above will be discussed with the City Commission at the Long Range Planning meeting on February 1, 2014. The Planning Division would like some feedback from the Planning Board on the prioritization of the implementation options listed above. This will assist in starting the discussion with the City Commission at the Long Range Planning meeting, and in the upcoming budget discussions.

Mr. Clein thought the wayfinding element could be explored from a planning perspective. Ms. Whipple-Boyce wanted to ensure that storage will not be permitted in any of the identified vias. The owner's permission will need to be obtained in order to place signs or greenery on their building. Also, identity for the vias needs to be explored further. Ms. Lazar said emphasis should be placed on cleaning up the alleys.

Mr. DeWeese liked the pilot idea. Take at least two alleys to try ideas and see what works for future roll-out. Chairman Boyle agreed and thought they should do it in collaboration with the Principal Shopping District ("PSD"). He favors the passage from Social with some type of improvement that connects to Commonwealth. He is less worried about the signage because he feels that will come after the alley gets going. Mr. DeWeese suggested Willits Alley for the second pilot project because of the businesses back there.

**01-20-14**

**MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA (none)**

01-21-14

**MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

- a. Communications (none)
- b. Administrative Approvals
  - 33214-33278 Woodward Ave., Piety Hill - To remove old bricks, planters and replace old concrete with new and install new 5 ft. planters with new plant material. (Application denied.) Ms. Ecker said the owners changed the site without getting approval or pulling permits. They will be coming to the next meeting for an informal discussion and are talking now about installing more plantings and decorative elements. Chairman Boyle said these are spaces that could be enlivened with some sculpture that is backlit.
- c. Draft Agenda for the Regular Planning Board Meeting on February 12, 2014
  - There may be no items for the agenda. If not, the meeting will be cancelled.
- d. Other Business
  - Ms. Ecker advised the Home Restaurant is changing their name to "The Bird and the Bread." Those are the nicknames of the grandfather of the owner's two children.

01-22-14

**PLANNING DIVISION ACTION ITEMS**

- a. Staff report on previous requests (none)
- b. Additional items from tonight's meeting (none)

01-23-14

**ADJOURNMENT**

No further business being evident, board members motioned to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.

Jana Ecker  
Planning Director