



PLANNING COMMISSION / DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT BOARD December 13, 2022

A Special Planning Commission / Downtown Management Board meeting was held in the City Council Chambers, Petoskey, Michigan, on Tuesday, December 13, 2022. Roll was called at 6:00 P.M. and the following were:

Present:

Cynthia Linn Robson, Chairperson
Betony Braddock
Doug Buck
Carolyn Dettmer
Richard Mooradian
Rick Neumann
Charles Willmott
Ted Pall

Ben Slocum
Robin Bennett
Joe Keedy
Drew Smith
Megan DeWindt
Gary Albert
Marnie Duse
Jennifer Shorter
John Murphy, Mayor

Absent:

Others: Justin Rashid
Tina DeMoore

Staff: Zachary Sompels, City Planner
Becky Goodman, Downtown Director
Shane Horn, City Manager

Commission and Board members went around the room and introduced themselves.

Downtown First Floor Residential Discussion

Planning Chair Robson presented the memo asking to hear the thoughts of the DMB and their general attitude toward first floor residential downtown.

Board Chair Slocum spoke about how he is not opposed to first floor residential in the downtown and that concerns about accessibility inherently come with living downtown which is a choice known going in.

Commissioner Neumann spoke about his concerns with losing commercial space downtown as it is a scarce resource.

Board member Albert raised concerns about parking and safety.

Board member Dewindt asked if there was demand for first floor residential in the back of downtown properties. Staff stated they have heard that demand numerous times.

Board member Smith asked that if housing were to be allowed, it be to achieve the goal of housing and not increase short term rental problems.

Chair Robson stated that design concerns regarding the entire concept would have to be further hashed out and mitigated.

Commissioner Willmott stated that building permit limitation would make the option of first floor residential in the back of downtown a limiting factor. Commissioner Willmott also asked to hear from the DMB if in fact the commercial spaces were too big.

Mayor Murphy stated that there are lots of housing opportunities on the horizon in and around the City and stated concern over losing commercial space downtown.

The overall sentiment was the housing in the rear of commercial spaces could be favorable depending on the stipulations attached to the proposal.

Downtown Possible Height Discussion

Chair Robson introduced the memo, asking for thoughts and comments on the possibility of increasing the height allowance of the downtown district.

Discussion and explanation on how to measure height began.

Questions and discussion on whether we are fielding inquiries and if so how many for a height increase.

Discussion about the human scale of the downtown began by taking into consideration the amount of light received in the day currently and whether a height increase would be detrimental to this.

Discussion then revolved around number of stories. If four stories were reasonable should the overall height go from 45 feet to 55?

Board member Smith stated that 4 stories could be a viable option with only a small increase in height from the current 45 feet.

Board member Keedy agreed that a few feet in height allowance isn't going to exceed the threshold of comfort he has with maintaining downtown for what it is.

Discussion around the potential financial option an additional story could open up began.

The sentiment of the group was the four stories could be a viable option for height allowance even with an increase of a few feet, as long as the aesthetic of the downtown isn't dramatically altered.

Overall Future Development Thoughts / Barriers as seen by the DMB

Chair Robson introduced the memo, asking the DMB's opinion on what could be improved overall.

Discussion on lighting concerns, especially in the park downtown began. Part of this discussion included the viability of changing the lights back to gas.

Discussion centered on finding a healthy balance of year round and seasonal residents and catering to them appropriately. This includes changing the narrative of only being a residential community and being able to thrive year round.

Discussion on the realities of parking issues year round and the cost that comes with it began. Mayor Murphy was in favor of some sort of covered parking deck to help with winter snow on potential downtown customer cars.

Commissioner Neumann stated that Federal and State tax credits options already exist for many building owners downtown and they should be encouraged to utilize those.

Public Comments

Justin Rashid spoke about the special nature of downtown and his concerns of the slow degradation of the commercial space in favor of adding residential.

The meeting was then adjourned at 7:35 P.M.