

## **City of Duluth Planning Commission**

**November 7, 2022 – City Hall Room 430  
Brown Bag Meeting Minutes**

### **Attendance:**

Members Present: Jason Crawford, Gary Eckenberg, Jason Hollinday, Sam Lobby, Margie Nelson, and Danielle Rhodes

Also Present: Adam Fulton, Jenn Moses, Noah Hobbs, Chris Lee, James Gittemeier, Steven Robertson, and Chris Fleege

### **Conversation about Parking Requirements:**

Adam Fulton provided background regarding recent conversations about parking requirements. Developers and business owners have reported increasing costs for parking requirements. The recent comprehensive plan included a recommendation to evaluate parking, and Councilor Hobbs has asked us to evaluate and report back to Council whether our existing minimums, maximums, stormwater, and other design requirements included in the 2010 UDC should be amended. As our goal is to be people-focused rather than car-centric, and with the DTA's Better Bus Blueprint that is intended to transform the transit system, changes may be needed. We too often approach cities from a car-centric paradigm. Cars are useful but costs are extensive for design, construction, and maintenance; surface parking lots take up significant space but generate little in taxes. If requirements were removed, regulations could allow for the market to determine parking needs and parking could be monetized to reflect the cost.

Jenn Moses provided an overview of the minimum parking requirements currently listed in the UDC, including challenges with getting the "right number" for retail, restaurants, etc. Many businesses and developers share special situations and unique uses that don't fit one standard. With so many outliers, the minimums/maximums can't accommodate needs.

Adam Fulton said that one thing staff is evaluating is an Interim Use Permit for temporary parking lots. Planning Commission would approve these and it would be for situations where parking is needed in the short-term, but long-term plans include future development.

City Councilor Noah Hobbs said he is involved to look at the best and highest use of spaces, and this includes thinking about the tax levy. Designs of cities are very car-centric now. While we should always have the choice to drive, it shouldn't be the default. With autonomous vehicles, and the Better Bus Blueprint, changes are coming; it's possible that Duluth has as much parking now as it will ever need. On the housing front, we would like to add more units of housing, and when parking is required it increases costs and lowers the amount of available space for housing units.

Adam Fulton asked two questions of the Commission: what are their thoughts generally on parking requirements, and does it differ depending on neighborhood?

Danielle Rhodes stated that people can usually find ways to get to work or a business, but need places to store cars at residences. Would like to incentivize employers to get bus passes, etc.

Gary Eckenberg said he agrees with Danielle. Community Action Duluth often helps get cars for people to allow them transportation to address poverty. Residential areas are very different from commercial core areas. In commercial areas, there are businesses that want parking above the maximums i.e. Jigsaw.

Sam Lobby said there is a trend towards EV/autonomous vehicles. We should think about what we don't know and how we can be flexible. Is in favor of getting rid of parking requirements.

Gary Eckenberg asked if we would also get rid of maximums. Adam Fulton responded that on one hand, this would let the market determine parking needs; but on the other hand, people will inevitably overbuild parking. Noah Hobbs said that in some cases, people that have lots of parking can drive out competition due to lack of parking sharing. Commission had a general discussion on the idea of requiring sharing of spaces. Adam Fulton said we currently do this for cell towers, but would need to look at how it would work for parking.

Jason Holliday pointed out we have two larger ramps (Shoppers City and US Bank ramp) currently shut down, and people then found other places to park. He says we should get rid of requirements and let the market sort it out.

Danielle Rhodes said that even with residential properties the parking could be worked out – for example, could have autonomous vehicles available for residents rather than every person needing their own car.

James Gittemeier discussed the burden placed on the public when parking is needed for business districts and new development, and the City is asked to provide it.

Jason Crawford said he agrees with where the technology is going and agrees with the opinion to let the market determine parking needs. In addition, the geographic area in Duluth is huge, and requires unique transportation requirements versus other cities.

Danielle Rhodes shared she just returned from the Netherlands, and saw a large area in the central city that was designated as pedestrian only, with specific parking hubs. This works well.

Margie said she is also supportive of the idea to get rid of minimums. She shared that Grand Rapids currently has a autonomous on-demand shuttle. Places like Garfield Square and similar housing sites do not need parking.

Chris Fleege shared concern for situations where developments don't install parking, and then ask the City to fix parking problems.

Noah Hobbs responded that the City should not be in the business of providing private parking.

Chris Lee said that people in pre-application meetings share struggles with meeting off-street parking requirements, both minimums and maximums.

Adam Fulton suggested that instead of variances to parking maximums, perhaps there is another tool or mechanism since the variance criteria are so specific. Noah Hobbs added that if parking maximums are exceeded, then sharing can be mandated.

Steven Robertson noted that changes such as these tend to be very impactful over the long-term, and changes to parking requirements, if they increase the need for on-street parking, can impact our ability to do road diets, provide bike facilities, or make other changes to right of way in the future.

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