

DENSITY WORKSHOP

A Workshop was held on November 27, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall and via GoToMeeting (408) 650-3123 - Access Code: 163-816-133.

Council President Lance Smith called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken. Present were members Charles Proctor, Kenneth Burgess, Steven F. Spina, Ph.D., Lance Smith, Mayor Melonie Bahr Monson, and Jodi Wilkeson. City Manager William Poe and City Attorney Matthew Maggard were present.

Staff present: Police Chief Derek Brewer, Planning Director Todd Vande Berg, Public Works Director Shane LeBlanc, Building Official Bill Burgess, CRA Director Gail Hamilton, Public Information Officer Kevin Weiss, Senior Planner Rodney Corriveau, GIS Tech Tommy-Lee Hunt, Planning Commission members Randy Stovall, Beth Aker, Dave Armstrong, Tracy Sullivan, Rosie Paulsen, ABC Action News Reporter Chad Mills and Videographer Delisa Walden and City Clerk Lori Hillman.

1. DENSITY WORKSHOP ITEM

1.1 Comprehensive Plan / Density Workshop

Planning Director Todd Vande Berg said the City is in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan with a vision through 2035 with housing and affordability as key elements to provide a variety of diverse and alternative housing choices.

Tammy Vrana with Vrana Consulting – Safety Harbor, Florida

Ms. Vrana narrated a PowerPoint presentation addressing the strategic location and design of multi-family housing developments and the need for diverse and attainable housing options. Housing needs to be affordable for residents to have choices within the community, no more than 30% of a household's income, and is the cornerstone of a healthy, stable, and prosperous community. She addressed specific challenges and concerns with multi-family development stemming from infrastructure/service strain, limited water supplies and greenspace loss. Zephyrhills has grown to a population of just over 19,000 as of April 2023 with a projected population of 31,300 in 2035 or approximately 1,200 new residents between 2023 and 2035. She stated the existing planning area is in the incorporated City boundary and Joint Planning Area/Utility Service Area that may be annexed into the City over time. She spoke about R4 parcels (multi-family residential zoning district) and where they exist. There is only one undeveloped parcel located on North Avenue, east of Green Drive. In addition to the R4 zoning, multi-family is allowed by right in the Reimagine Gall Blvd. Form Based Code area (infill and redevelopment area) and is also allowed as a conditional use, if approved, in the office/professional zoning district.

Ms. Vrana touched on the "Live Local Act" passed this year by legislature that applies to multi-family rental units and preempts local regulation on zoning, density and height regulations for certain multi-family or mixed use affordable housing developments. Developments must have a minimum of 40% of their units for households with incomes up to 120% of the area median income and can be located in any commercial, industrial or mixed use zoning district by right. The maximum units applicable is the highest the City allows, 20 units per acre, and the allowable height is the maximum allowed by the City within a one mile radius of the development site. Otherwise, the developments under this act would need to be consistent with the local comprehensive plan and land development regulations.

Planning Director Todd Vande Berg addressed the conditional use process and said City staff meets with an applicant submitting a proposed multi-family apartment project prior to pre-application to make them aware of density in the right location per Council and staff. He said staff are looking at increasing the density in the Form Based Code area to build two-to three story structures. Every conditional use will be reviewed independently by assessing the characteristics and compatibility to the particular site.

Councilman Burgess said density is being discussed due to the stress on the City's infrastructure and services. He is in favor of decreasing the density from 20 units per acre to 14 units per acre.

Spoke from the floor: CRA Director Gail Hamilton – City of Zephyrhills

Ms. Hamilton said CRA staff are currently working on the CRA Master Plan and have received feedback through the assessment and planners to look at the density for apartments and

multi-family developments with a percentage of affordability with a mix of income. The right location for density is the urban core of the CRA district but since there are no large tracks of land, redevelopment will have to occur for the developer to make money. Staff is looking at combining lots, creating first floor garages to incorporate parking as part of the building, looking at incentives, and are in the process of purchasing lots.

Council Vice President Burgess said the key word is redevelopment as the definitive line to allow conditional uses in the CRA, Gall Blvd. and 5th Avenue areas.

Councilman Proctor said his concerns with higher density are water, traffic, and the loads on our schools that are currently over capacity.

Councilwoman Wilkeson said she can see two, three, four or five unit quadraplexes, possibly three stories, with parking underneath developing on the one way pairs and reserve US-301 for commercial and higher density office/professional development.

Council President Smith said there will come a time and need to build affordable housing for seniors. A developer will not build at 14 units per acre, they will want to build high density near the hospital or a graduated care facility. The right density in the right place should be permissible especially if it is an area of need.

Ms. Vrana suggested Council and staff create key issues to link to strategy ideas relative to compatible location and design. One strategy would be to establish context-based place types based on the rural to urban transect with the objective of creating integrated, livable and sustainable places according to their distinct locations within the City. A place type is a tool that focuses on the character and the function of places that work with the future land use map. The steps involved in creating place types is during the comprehensive plan update to include community visioning where the community would be asked where and how the City should grow. She pointed out Conservation Subdivisions are designed to preserve valued green spaces on a site while providing for slightly higher densities on a portion and combined with Transfer of Development Rights, provides an incentive for conservation while protecting rural areas from sprawl & incentivizing infill & redevelopment infrastructure. She suggested Council focus and prioritize where tax dollars will be spent to match with focused growth. She touched upon the missing middle housing that is intended to create greater housing choices and opportunities for current and new residents. The missing middle housing is likely to be more affordable than single family detached homes such as bungalows, duplexes, and townhouses, etc. If multi-family developments are strategically located close to where people go to work, employment centers, community amenities, parks, schools and transit services, vehicle miles can be reduced for households and lessen the traffic impact on the community. Having pedestrian and bike friendly design and infrastructure are major determinants of how people travel, if you build it they will come.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Meeting adjourned: 5:00 p.m.
Submitted by Lori L. Hillman