

# **CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS**

*NOTICE OF MEETING  
PLANNING COMMISSION*



## **Meeting Agenda Full Detail**

**Thursday, January 5, 2012**

**4:00 PM**

**Council Chambers**

### **Planning Commission**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
CITY HALL - 420 N. Pokegama Ave.  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744**

**Call To Order****Call of Roll**

**Setting of Agenda - This is an opportunity to approve the regular agenda as presented or add/delete an agenda item by a majority vote of the Commissioners present.**

**Approval of Minutes**

**11-1990** Approve the minutes of the November 3, 2011 4:00 pm regular meeting and the 3:30 pm worksession.

**Attachments:** November 3, 2011 PC Meeting Draft Minutes

**General Business**

**11-1991** Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding amendments to Section 30-458(c)1 of the City of Grand Rapids Municipal Code, that pertain to site development compliance requirements.

**Attachments:** January 5, 2012 PC Staff Report  
Background Info 1-5-12 Meeting  
Draft Amendments-Sec. 30-458(c)1  
Considerations

**Public Input**

*Individuals may address the Planning Commission about any non public hearing item or any item not included on the Regular Meeting Agenda. Speakers are requested to come to the podium, state their name and address for the record and limit their remarks to three (3) minutes.*

**Miscellaneous\Updates****Adjourn**

NEXT REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:  
Thursday, February 2, 2012

**PLANNING COMMISSION:**

*Lee Anderson  
Mark Gothard  
Ron Niemala  
Michael Twite - Chairperson  
Dale Yelle  
Shane McKellep - Vice Chair  
Julie Fedje-Johnston*

**STAFF:**

**Rob Mattei (Community Development Director)**

**Eric Trast (Community Development Specialist)**

**Aurimy Groom (Recorder)**

**Chad Sterle (City Attorney)**



Legislation Details (With Text)

**File #:** 11-1990      **Version:** 1      **Name:** Approve the minutes  
**Type:** Minutes      **Status:** Approval of Miinutes  
**File created:** 12/29/2011      **In control:** Planning Commission  
**On agenda:** 1/5/2012      **Final action:**  
**Title:** Approve the minutes of the November 3, 2011 4:00 pm regular meeting and the 3:30 pm worksession.  
**Sponsors:**  
**Indexes:**  
**Code sections:**  
**Attachments:** [November 3, 2011 PC Meeting Draft Minutes](#)

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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**Title**  
Approve the minutes of the November 3, 2011 4:00 pm regular meeting and the 3:30 pm worksession.

body  
**Background Information:**  
*See attached Draft Minutes.*

PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSESSION  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2011 – 3:30 P.M.  
GRAND RAPIDS CITY HALL – 420 NORTH POKEGAMA AVE.  
GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA 55744

CALL TO ORDER:

Pursuant to due notice and call thereof, a Special Meeting/Worksession of the Grand Rapids Planning Commission was held in Council Chambers of City Hall on Thursday, November 3, 2011 at 3:30 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL: On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Commissioners: Mark Gothard, Michael Twite, Shane McKellep, Julie Fedje-Johnston, Ron Niemala. Absent: Dale Yelle, Lee Anderson.

Staff Present: Rob Mattei, Eric Trast, Eric Scott, Lasha Karels.

The Planning Commission met to discuss the following:

Legistar Training.

I.T. Director, Eric Scott and I.T. Tech, Lasha Karels provided training on the new Legistar system and the Commissioners new City email accounts.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Aurimy Groom, Recorder



# CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

NOTICE OF MEETING  
PLANNING COMMISSION

## Minutes - Final Planning Commission

COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
CITY HALL - 420 N. Pokegama Ave.  
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

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Thursday, November 3, 2011

4:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### Call To Order

### Call of Roll

- Present** 6 - Commissioner Julie Fedje-Johnston, Commissioner Shane McKellep, Commissioner Ron Niemala, Chairperson Michael Twite, Commissioner Mark Gothard, and Commissioner Dale Yelle
- Absent** 1 - Commissioner Lee Anderson

**Setting of Agenda - This is an opportunity to approve the regular agenda as presented or add/delete an agenda item by a majority vote of the Commissioners present.**

### Approval of Minutes

Approve minutes of the October 6, 2011 - 4:00 pm regular meeting

A motion was made by Commissioner Julie Fedje-Johnston, seconded by Commissioner Shane McKellep, that the minutes of the October 6, 2011 regular meeting be Approved As Presented . The motion PASSED by an unanimous vote.

### General Business

Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding the rezoning of one parcel of land from R-4 (Multi-Family Residential- high density) to M (Medical) located within Block 58, Town of Grand Rapids.

A motion was made by Commissioner Julie Fedje-Johnston, seconded by Commissioner Mark Gothard that, based on the findings of fact presented here today, and in the public's best interest, the Planning Commission does hereby forward to the City Council a recommendation to approve the rezoning of property, described as; E 93' of S 10' of Lot 1 & E 93' of Lot 2, BLK, Blk. 58, Town of Grand Rapids, Itasca County, Minnesota, from R-4 (Multi-Family Residential-high density) to M (Medical);

Commissioner Fedje-Johnston read her considerations for the record.

1. Will the change affect the character of neighborhoods?

No, the property is currently used by Northland Counseling and will continue to be used as such. Other uses allowed under the change to Medical zoning would be compatible with the existing use of the property. Currently, the building is split between zones—part is zoned for medical and part is zoned for R-4

2. Would the change foster economic growth in the community?

Yes, the proposed change would allow Northland Counseling to expand or more efficiently use its building.

3. Would the proposed change be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance?

Yes, but for the change of the zoning in 2008 to accommodate the redevelopment of the hospital site, the property would still be zoned medical and part of the property remains zoned medical. The adjacent area is zoned medical and is used for medical purposes.

4. Would the change be in the best interest of the general public?

Yes, the zoning change would accurately reflect the current use of the building.

5. Would the change be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?

Yes, the 2011 Comprehensive Plan sites offering excellent medical care in its vision statement. The first and second guiding principles call for directing development to appropriate locations and harmonizing change with the existing community fabric. The proposed change will accurately reflect the actual use of the area.

The motion PASSED by an unanimous vote.

**Public Input**

**Miscellaneous\Updates**

**Adjourn**

A motion was made by Commissioner Julie Fedje-Johnston, seconded by Commissioner Mark Gothard, that the meeting be adjourned at 4:20 p.m. . The motion PASSED by an unanimous vote.

DRAFT





Legislation Details (With Text)

**File #:** 11-1991      **Version:** 1      **Name:** Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding amendments to Section 30-458(c)1.

**Type:** Agenda Item      **Status:** General Business

**File created:** 12/29/2011      **In control:** Planning Commission

**On agenda:** 1/5/2012      **Final action:**

**Title:** Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding amendments to Section 30-458(c)1 of the City of Grand Rapids Municipal Code, that pertain to site development compliance requirements.

**Sponsors:**

**Indexes:**

**Code sections:**

**Attachments:** [January 5, 2012 PC Staff Report](#)  
[Background Info 1-5-12 Meeting](#)  
[Draft Amendments-Sec. 30-458\(c\)1](#)  
[Considerations](#)

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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Title

Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding amendments to Section 30-458(c)1 of the City of Grand Rapids Municipal Code, that pertain to site development compliance requirements.

body

**Background Information:**

*See attached Planning Commission Staff Report, Background Information, and Draft Text Amendments.*



# Planning Commission Staff Report

<b>Agenda Item #2</b>	<b>Community Development Department</b>	<b>Date:</b> 1/5/12
<b>Statement of Issue:</b>	Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding amendments to Section 30-458(c)1 of the City of Grand Rapids Municipal Code, that pertain to site development compliance requirements.	
<b>Background:</b>	<p>On October 19, 2011, the Grand Rapids City Council Policy and Ordinance Review Committee (PORC) met and discussed a concern expressed to them, pertaining to the portion of the Municipal Code that addresses Site Development Compliance Requirements (Class 2 Nonconforming Uses)- <i>Section 30-458(c)1.</i>, more specifically #1, which requires an additional 15% of the value of the proposed project be applied towards addressing site improvements.</p> <p>Currently the Ordinance reads:</p> <p><i>c. Site development compliance requirements (Class 2 nonconforming uses).</i> Lawful class 2 nonconforming uses existing at the time of adoption of the ordinance from which this article is derived shall be "grandfathered," <u>however, any modification to an existing structure, or the addition of any structure, valued at equal to or greater than \$5,000.00, shall require compliance with the site development standards (division 7 of this article) subject to the following standards:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <u>An additional 15 percent or the value of a proposed building improvement project must be added to the project and applied towards site improvements.</u></li><li>2. The proposed site improvements required to satisfy the requirements of this section shall be submitted for approval to the zoning administrator.</li><li>3. Written cost estimates shall be provided for any site improvements being proposed.</li><li>4. <u>With the understanding that the 15 percent improvement requirements will not bring many sites up to full compliance, the required improvements shall be prioritized in the following order, where practical: pavement of parking lots, screening of dumpsters, screening of outdoor storage, bufferyard development, and general landscaping.</u></li><li>5. Phasing-in improvements: Where the estimated site improvement costs exceed \$2,000.00, the board of zoning appeals may allow the owner to phase in the required improvements over a three-year period provided that:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. The property owner files a binding agreement, in a form acceptable to the city, committing the owner to making such improvements within three years; and</li></ol></li></ol>	

	<p style="text-align: center;">ii. At least one-third of the improvement costs must be spent in the first year.</p> <p>Staff described to the Council the site development requirements for new commercial buildings, and the benefits the application of the subject section of the ordinance, has had on the overall aesthetic appearance of existing, but noncompliant commercial properties in the community, a value that was referenced numerous times in the updated Comprehensive Plan (<i>see attachments</i>). It was further explained that this requirement is the primary mechanism for, over time, applying the same standards that new development is required to meet.</p> <p>Generally, the PORC felt there was a value added to the community, through the implementation of Section 30-458(c)1.c., though they questioned whether the project values, triggering this requirement, were still relevant, as this portion of the ordinance was added to the Municipal Code in approximately 1987.</p> <p>The PORC recommended that staff and the Planning Commission consider adjusting the project values to account for inflation, and adding language that allowed for some discretion on staff's part when applying the requirements of the ordinance to a proposed project. Staff has made the following adjustments for inflation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$5,000 X 1.03% (25 yrs.) = \$10,468.89 – <u>round up to \$15,000.00</u></li> <li>• \$2,000 X 1.03% (25 yrs.) = \$4,187.55 – <u>round up to \$5,000.00</u></li> </ul> <p>Staff recommends rounding, the adjusted for inflation numbers, up to the figures shown. For practical purposes, 15% of the proposed minimum \$15,000 (\$2,250) would be a reasonable amount that could be applied toward one of the most commonly required site improvements: minor landscaping/bufferyard plantings or dumpster screening.</p> <p><i>The attached draft amendments are intended to be used as a starting point for Planning Commission discussion, or may be recommended for approval as prepared.</i></p>
<b>Considerations:</b>	<p>The Planning Commission should make specific findings of fact regarding the proposed amendments to the ordinance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Will the change affect the character of the neighborhood?</li> <li>2. Will the change foster economic growth in the community?</li> <li>3. Would the proposed change be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the Zoning Ordinance?</li> <li>4. Would the change be in the best interest of the general public?</li> <li>5. Would the change be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?</li> </ol>
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p>Based on the above (and other) findings the Commission should consider a recommendation in regard to these draft changes.</p>
<b>Required Action:</b>	<p>Pass a motion, to forward either a favorable recommendation, either with or without changes to the draft amendments, to the City Council, or pass a</p>

	<p>motion, forwarding an unfavorable recommendation to the City Council regarding the amendments to Section 30-458(c)1. of the Grand Rapids Municipal Code.</p> <p><u>Example Motion:</u></p> <p>Motion by _____, second by _____ that in the public’s best interest, the Planning Commission does hereby forward a <b><u>(favorable)(unfavorable)</u></b> recommendation to the City Council regarding the attached draft text amendments to Section 30-458(c)1. of the Grand Rapids Municipal Code of Ordinances.</p>
<b>Attachments:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background information</li><li>• Draft Amendments</li></ul>

(e) The site plan materials must be approved by the city prior to the issuance of any building permit. Once approved, they become the working plans for the proposed project. No deviations from approved plans will be allowed without written approval of the zoning administrator.

(Code 1978, § 23.6(H); Ord. No. 07-03-06, § 2(Exh. A), 3-27-2007)

**Sec. 30-457. Fees.**

Fees for all zoning related applications shall be by resolution adopted by the city council, as amended from time to time, and will be collected at the time of application.

(Code 1978, §§ 23.15, 29.02(b), (c), (g); Ord. No. 07-03-06, § 2(Exh. A), 3-27-2007)

**Sec. 30-458. Nonconforming uses.**

(a) *Classification.*

- (1) *Class 1.* Those where the use of the building or land does not conform to the district use regulations of division 4 of this article.
- (2) *Class 2.* Those where the use of the building or land does comply with the district use regulations of this article, but such use does not meet in its entirety the site development and design standards (division 7 of this article) and off-street parking and loading requirements set forth in divisions 8 and 9 of this article.

(b) *Purpose and intent.* It is the intent of this division to permit the continuance of a lawful use of any building or land existing at the effective date of the ordinance from which this article is derived though such use may not conform with the provisions of this division. It is also recognized that Class 1 uses are incompatible with the permitted uses in the districts in which located and it is the intent of this division not to encourage their continuation or expansion. Class 2 uses are generally compatible, in terms of use, with the district in which located. It is, therefore, the intent of this section to encourage their continuance, allow for their expansion, and to encourage, over time, ever greater compliance with the requirements of this division.

(c) *Nonconforming use regulations.* Nonconforming uses of buildings, structures and land shall be subject to the following regulations:

- (1) *Structural alterations, replacement or enlargement.*
  - a. *Class 1* shall not be structurally altered or enlarged unless the resultant altered or enlarged building or use shall conform in terms of usage to the provisions of this article. Single-family dwellings and owner occupied duplexes damaged or destroyed by fire, explosion, or other act of nature may be reconstructed or replaced with a building of similar size and value of the original building.
  - b. *Class 2.* Nonconforming uses of structures which do not meet the site development and design standards (division 7 of this article) and/or the off-street parking and loading requirements (divisions 8 and 9 of this article) shall be allowed to be

structurally altered or replaced provided there is no further violation of these requirements than lawfully exists at the time of such alteration or replacement.

- c. *Site development compliance requirements (Class 2 nonconforming uses)*. Lawful Class 2 nonconforming uses existing at the time of adoption of the ordinance from which this article is derived shall be "grandfathered," however, any modification to an existing structure, or the addition of any structure, valued at equal to or greater than \$5,000.00, shall require compliance with the site development standards (division 7 of this article) subject to the following standards:
1. An additional 15 percent or the value of a proposed building improvement project must be added to the project and applied towards site improvements.
  2. The proposed site improvements required to satisfy the requirements of this section shall be submitted for approval to the zoning administrator.
  3. Written cost estimates shall be provided for any site improvements being proposed.
  4. With the understanding that the 15 percent improvement requirements will not bring many sites up to full compliance, the required improvements shall be prioritized in the following order, where practical: pavement of parking lots, screening of dumpsters, screening of outdoor storage, bufferyard development, and general landscaping.
  5. Phasing-in improvements: Where the estimated site improvement costs exceed \$2,000.00, the board of zoning appeals may allow the owner to phase in the required improvements over a three-year period provided that:
    - i. The property owner files a binding agreement, in a form acceptable to the city, committing the owner to making such improvements within three years; and
    - ii. At least one-third of the improvement costs must be spent in the first year.
  6. Large scale commercial developments qualifying as Class 2 non-conforming uses shall incorporate additional improvements for screening of dumpsters, screening of outdoor storage, bufferyard development, general landscaping, and other standards that are practical to bring the property closer to compliance with the site design standards contained in section 30-902. The building design standards contained in section 30-903 shall also be incorporated when practical with a priority placed on front facade improvements. Large scale commercial developments shall be excluded from the 15 percent value requirement contained in item 1 above.
- d. Any site or lot or part thereof being converted, enlarged, reconstructed or altered in any way or changed in use for any purpose shall be in full conformity with the provisions of this article.

- (4) The display items shall consist solely of products sold or distributed within the principal structure by the occupant thereof.  
(Code 1978, § 23.6(C); Ord. No. 07-03-06, § 2(Exh. A), 3-27-2007)

**Sec. 30-594. Landscaping and bufferyard requirements.**

(a) *Purpose and intent.* The inclusion of landscaping standards in this article is designed to promote the health, safety and general welfare of city residents and property owners. Effective landscaping and buffering can greatly enhance an area's visual appeal. Buffering can minimize the adverse impacts of intensive land uses. It can also protect adjacent land uses from excessive noise, light, litter, and traffic.

(b) *Scope of applicability.* The requirements of this article shall apply to all uses, structures, or properties constructed, extended, enlarged, moved, or altered, with the exception of properties zoned RR, SRR, R-1, SR-1, R-1a, SR-1a, R-2, or SR-2. All open areas not used or required for buildings, off-street parking, drives or storage shall be landscaped with a combination of conifers and deciduous trees, shrubs, flowers, ground covers and grass. One- and two-family dwellings permitted in any zone shall be exempt from the requirements of this section.

(c) *Bufferyards.* Plant materials and fencing required in the installation of bufferyards shall be determined in accordance with Table 3-A, bufferyard components. They shall be located within the required front, side and rear yards, and the type of bufferyard required between zoning lots shall be determined in accordance with Table 3-B, bufferyard requirements by location.

(d) *Maintenance of bufferyards.* Shall consist of all acts necessary to ensure that areas remain useable as originally designed and that no hazards, nuisances or unhealthy conditions exist. Where screening with landscape materials is proposed in lieu of required walls or fences, all materials shall have a minimum opacity of 90 percent year-round. The owner shall have the responsibility to maintain all such screening.

(e) *Bufferyards and street tree credits.* When existing trees, buffers or other landscape materials exist, the developer may receive credit for such trees, buffers, or landscape materials, provided they are maintained in accordance with the requirements of subsection (d) of this section. The zoning administrator, upon receipt of a written request and submittal of a survey of existing trees, landscaping or buffers, may waive the landscaping and bufferyard requirements to the degree that the waiver is consistent with the intent of this article.

(f) *Minimum standards for landscaping/buffering materials.*

(1) Minimum plant sizes are established as follows:

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| a. Canopy trees:    | Two inches at six inches above ground  |
| b. Evergreen trees  | 60" in height                          |
| c. Understory trees | 1½" caliper at six inches above ground |

## Recent Examples - Section 30-458(c) impacts/improvements

- Evergreen Terrace \$436,000 (addition) – parking lot striping, dumpster screening
- Edwards Oil/Lucky 7 (Remodel & Car wash) \$641,500 – Landscaping, parking restriping/curbing, dumpster screening
- Service Master (Industrial Park Building Remodel) \$145,000 – Parking lot addition, tree planting
- MCIS – office building/redevelopment of site- \$397, 218 – Remove unneeded/nonconforming portion of parking lot.
- Clusiau Sales and Rental- Showroom addition- \$1.75 million – Parking lot improvements, landscaping
- Forest Lake Motel- addition of new unit- \$100,000 – greenspace, landscaping
- IEDC – Interior remodel of industrial building - \$152,440 – parking lot, landscaping, dumpster screening
- Community Presbyterian – remodel/addition - \$1,676,000 – parking lot improvements, landscaping
- Advocates for Family Peace- remodel/addition - \$590,000 – landscaping
- Grand Rapids Alliance Church- building addition - \$309,000 – parking
- McDonalds- cooler/drive thru addition – \$325,000- dumpster screening improvements
- River South Apartments – Exterior remodel- \$1,350,000 – dumpster screening
- Jerry Minor Realty (Pokegama Plaza) – Exterior remodel/re-roofing- \$340,000 – dumpster screening/landscaping
- Glen's Army/Navy – Addition/exterior remodel- \$120,000 – landscaping/bufferyard
- Slumberland Furniture – Addition- \$961,000 – landscaping, nonconforming impervious surface removal, parking lot improvements, dumpster screening- (carry over from last year project)
- Rapids Welding Supply (building addition) - \$86,500 – parking lot improvements, dumpster screening
- Subway Pokegama Ave- (parking lot work) - \$40,000 – landscaping improvements
- Southside Tire – (addition) - \$90,000- landscaping additions, dumpster screening
- Casper Construction – (office building) - \$189,800 – landscaping and contractor yard screening fence
- Pokegama Plaza Liquor – (building renovation) - \$217,280 – landscaping, parking island
- L&M Supply – Section 30-458(c) required L&M to become closer to compliance with the Large Scale Commercial Development design standards used for big boxes, such as the new Wal-Mart
- Target – (same as with L&M)



### **Some Older Examples - Section 30-458(c) impacts/improvements**

- Blandin Paper Company – landscaping/trees along Pokegama Ave. and 2<sup>nd</sup> St. N. perimeter of Blandin parking lot
- GRSB South Branch – landscaping/trees in parking and driveway areas
- K-Mart & Pokegama Boardwalk Center– Parking lot common N/S drive lane delineated by islands with landscaping/trees
- Grand Rapids Ford and GM – landscaping/trees along 169 and between GM and Ford.
- Tobacco Den – landscaped island in front parking lot along 169



**Accessible Movement**

We understand and support the need for residents and visitors to move around our City with equal ease by car, bicycle, or on foot. Streets design should accommodate all modes of transportation and public transportation provides mobility to those without cars.

**Sustainable Built Infrastructure**

The provision and maintenance of high-quality grey infrastructure is necessary to foster investment in a sustainable economy and maintain a high quality of life. Grey infrastructure includes: drinking water and wastewater utilities; energy systems; technology infrastructure; and surface and air transportation systems.

**Sustainable Natural Infrastructure**

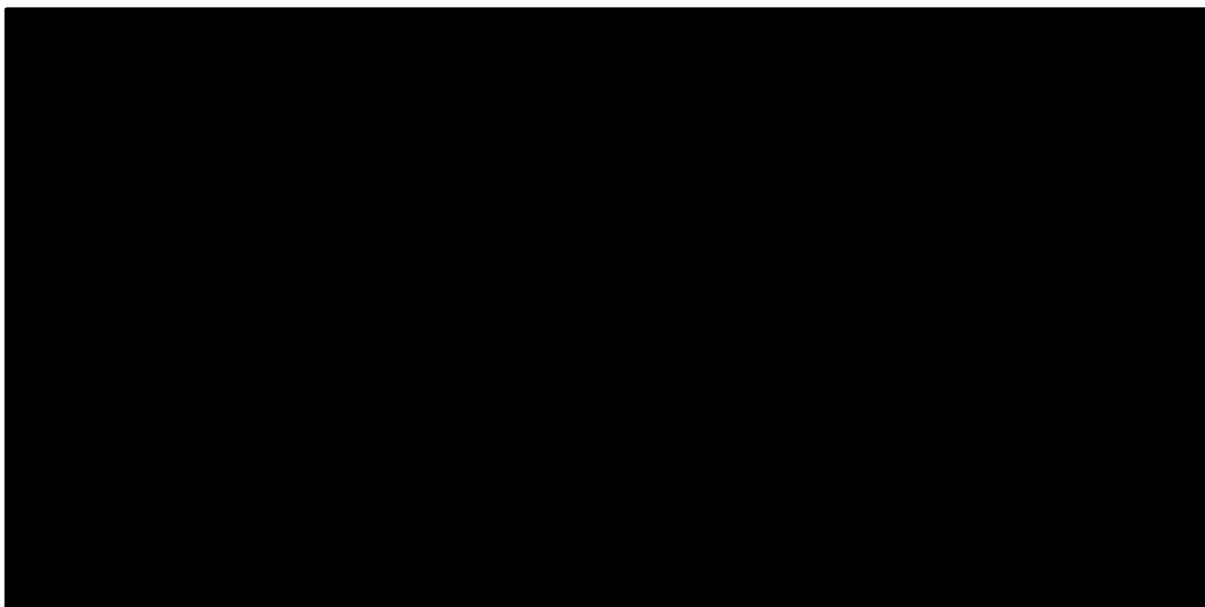
Our natural environment and natural resources are a defining and valued characteristic of our community. People, economy, and natural systems are connected in all aspects of daily life. Development should enhance natural systems, and sustainable natural systems should promote a sustainable economic base.

**Education**

We value and promote equal access to quality, lifelong, educational opportunities for all residents. Education includes workforce development, continuing education, and information access, in addition to traditional schools. The more that education is integrated into the community, the better all other aspects of the community will function.

**Economic Opportunities**

A strong diversified economy is a prerequisite to the full realization of all other values. We value a healthy, growing economy that provides opportunities for large and small businesses, rewards entrepreneurship, and provides meaningful careers to residents.





### **Question 3: Which alternative is preferred?**

Participants' responses to this question were very mixed, both within focus groups and across groups. As noted in the discussion for Question 2, most participants liked elements of both alternatives. Alternative B was favored for reasons that included more housing growth options, emphasizing new industrial growth, better use of neighborhood mixed uses, and encouraging redevelopment and vitality along the river. Alternative A was favored for a greater medical campus expansion, no industrial park on Highway 38, more green space and less sprawl.

Of the 15 groups, a few groups found the question unfair – they wanted more time to consider the alternatives before being asked to prefer one.

### **Question 4: Is there one place shown on either of the alternatives for which you particularly like or don't like what is portrayed on the map?**

Areas that were called out as particularly good ideas included:

- Riverfront – the new commercial development ideas (restaurants, facing the river, economic) and increased green space combination
- Green corridors/buffers for parks and trails along waterfronts
- Expanded medical campus
- Highway 169 - the commercial corridor, promotes economic expansion
- Downtown mixed use areas
- Expanded urban services for residential expansion
- Emphasis on encouraging infill and a wider mix of densities and uses.

Areas that were called out as particularly troubling included:

- Highway 38 industrial park
- Downtown was not clearly more livable and walkable.
- No changes to the Highway 169 commercial corridor to give it more diversity and character.
- Affordable housing was not identified in the downtown.
- Resource management category in the rural areas included too many conflicting land uses.

### **Question 5: Do you consider encouraging redevelopment of existing developed areas a necessary or reasonable goal for Grand Rapids take?**

Not all the groups discussed this question. However, those that did almost exclusively endorsed the concept of infill and redevelopment as more important than opening up more land for development in the City's rural areas. The reasons for this preference were quite varied. Some were concerned that extending sewer, water, and roads would put upward pressure on taxes. Others were concerned with retaining the rural character of the City's rural areas, while still others saw redevelopment and infill as a means of enhancing the City's existing neighborhoods and commercial areas through better building design, more green space, and improved connectivity.



**Question 6: What are the important issues that you believe the Plan should address?**

This question offered the opportunity to discuss non-mapped issues. Many groups did not wait to be asked this question, but instead moved to it via earlier questions.

Different groups responded quite differently to this question. Some believed that the future land use map captured most of what was important. Most groups, however, discussed issues that could not be mapped but that they believed should be part of the Plan.

**Livability and Character**

- Important issues that the Comprehensive Plan should address are: sprawl, infrastructure, quality of life, and attracting young people to live and work in Grand Rapids.
- Quality of life encompasses many facets including quality public services, reasonable taxes, economic/educational/creative opportunity, and cultural diversity.
- The map does not address character and quality issues about commercial areas that “look like a dump,” poor housing quality, and the image of Grand Rapids (In Minnesota’s Nature).
- Retaining the City’s small town feel, including both:
  - keep developed areas compact
  - not so dense feels like an inner city
- Annexed areas that are rural should be treated differently in the long run than areas reserved for expansion. That is, zoning and land use rules should acknowledge this difference.
  - Preserve natural features in newly annexed areas.
  - Rural uses such as livestock need to be accommodated.

**Sustainability**

- Sustainable practices in City operations and development practices will attract people to Grand Rapids (e.g. Green Step Cities Program).
- The Plan needs to address energy goals.
  - Develop and promote prototype alternative energy practices (e.g. build an affordable model energy efficient home).
  - Set energy and water rates to encourage conservation and discourage waste.
  - Use renewable energy for city buildings.
  - Install Dark Sky exterior lighting in the city.
  - Get more recycling through contract with Waste Management, Inc.
- Expand green space within the city’s urban areas.
- Ensure that development faces the riverfront and promotes other green corridors
- Protect and restore natural resources
  - Trees are an important part of Grand Rapids’ environment. Create a plan for expanding tree cover and replacing old trees as they die, e.g. old pines in parks.
  - Control deer in city limits, provide wildlife corridors in and out of the city.
  - Develop a monitoring plan for dealing with septic systems and wells in newly annexed areas.
  - Address the issue of runoff from County Fair Grounds parking area that degrades water quality.
- Address schools in the Plan.
  - Elementary schools may be needed in future; at 20 acres per site requires planning now.
  - The schools need to do a better job of incorporating sustainable practices, particularly recycling.

## DRAFT AMENDMENTS

c. *Site development compliance requirements (Class 2 nonconforming uses)*. Lawful class 2 nonconforming uses existing at the time of adoption of the ordinance from which this article is derived shall be "grandfathered," however, any modification to an existing structure, or the addition of any structure, valued at equal to or greater than ~~\$5,000.00~~\$15,000.00, shall require compliance with the site development standards (division 7 of this article) subject to the following standards:

1. Up to ~~An~~ additional 15 percent ~~of~~ the value of a proposed building improvement project must be added to the project and applied towards site improvements.
2. The proposed site improvements required to satisfy the requirements of this section shall be submitted for approval to the zoning administrator.
3. Written cost estimates shall be provided for any site improvements being proposed.
4. With the understanding that the 15 percent improvement requirements will not bring many sites up to full compliance, the required improvements shall be prioritized in the following order, where practical: pavement of parking lots, screening of dumpsters, screening of outdoor storage, bufferyard development, and general landscaping.
5. Phasing-in improvements: Where the estimated site improvement costs exceed ~~\$2,000.00~~\$5,000.00, the board of zoning appeals may allow the owner to phase in the required improvements over a three-year period provided that:
  - i. The property owner files a binding agreement, in a form acceptable to the city, committing the owner to making such improvements within three years; and
  - ii. At least one-third of the improvement costs must be spent in the first year.

# PLANNING COMMISSION

## Considerations

### ZONING ORDINANCE

1. Will the change affect the character of neighborhoods?
2. Would the change foster economic growth in the community?
3. Would the proposed change be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance?
4. Would the change be in the best interest of the general public?
5. Would the change be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?