

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
MAY 5, 2021**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via a Zoom Meeting with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln; Members Jennifer Bressler, Joseph Scoboria, Daniel Horman, Terry Siggins, Cody Rhoads, Maria Napoli, and Zachary Shaver; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira.

Visitors Suzanne Dungan, Resident

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the April 7, 2021 minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler.

Motion carried 9-0.

Design Standards

Mr. Wert referred to Chapter 4 of the Derck & Edson master plan to review their recommended design standards, specifically items one through four:

1. **Eliminate the General Business District Overlay** – This overlay had been assigned to the 300 and 700 blocks of Penn Avenue and the 600 block of Reading Avenue approximately ten years ago in an effort to provide more flexibility to encourage business uses in both the Central and General Business Districts. The inherent use of day care centers, veterinary offices, automobile sales and service facilities and gas stations undermine the goal to promote pedestrian-oriented shopping areas within the downtown area. It was noted that this flexibility has not been used and does not fit with the overall vision for Penn Avenue. For consistency purposes, it was recommended to eliminate this overlay district from Penn Avenue.
2. **Modify the Commercial and Light Industrial Redevelopment Overlay** – This overlay has been assigned to all Light Industrial, General Business and Central Business Districts.
 - a. The master plan recommends expanding the overlay boundaries north and east of Delaney Circle to allow mixed use development and a reconfigured civic space along North Fifth Avenue. The recommended parcel modifications were the current Morris Pace facility, the parking area adjacent to the traffic circle and Reading Avenue and the first Residential Professional parcel located adjacent to the traffic circle and Tulpehocken Avenue. The added flexibility that would be provided to these parcels would allow uses such as office or residential space on the upper floors with retail space on the first floor within an Institutional District without the need to request a variance. It was thought that the two nursing home facilities adjacent to the traffic circle could be repurposed to residential housing and that offering this flexibility would not be detrimental to the overall vision of this area. Commission members agreed to add this redevelopment overlay as recommended and include the Manor Care parcel and the parcel known as 415 Reading Avenue.
 - b. The master plan recommended allowing mixed use development with residential uses over retail uses facing primary shopping streets such as Penn Avenue, Fifth Avenue, Sixth Avenue and portions of Reading Avenue. The current percentage limitations of upper floor

residential use discourage redevelopment without providing clear guidance. Commission members agreed to modify these sections of the Zoning Ordinance to be more specific.

- c. The master plan recommends allowing residential-only redevelopment of aging properties to include residential development without requiring ground floor commercial uses at locations that are inappropriate for pedestrian-oriented retail/service uses. The Borough's Engineer will be requested to guide this implementation within the Light Industrial district.
 - d. The master plan recommended allowing and incentivizing small scale artisan production/maker space within the upper floors of buildings that face primary shopping streets and on all floors in other Commercial/Industrial/Institutional district areas. Commission members agreed to this use and will request the Borough Engineer to provide feedback on how to implement this new regulation into the Zoning Ordinance.
 - e. The master plan recommended modifying the maximum height of buildings along streets to create more pedestrian-scaled street walls with building heights up to forty-five feet high along most sidewalks for the ten feet closest to the street. This item was tabled until form-based codes would be discussed at a later date.
3. **Adopt a Regulating Plan for the Downtown to designate locations with storefronts, active frontages and civic spaces should be required or incentivized** – This item was tabled for form-based codes discussions.
 4. **Modify Front Yard Standards to Align with Existing Front Yard Conditions** – It was recommended to define a maximum front yard setback to properly define the street wall and discourage or prohibit the placement of parking within the front yard. Clarification would be requested from Derck & Edson as to sidewalk width and minimum building setbacks.

Mr. Wert requested Commission members to review the form-based code and regulating plan for next month's discussion.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 p.m. by Mr. Siggins and seconded by Mr. Horman.

Motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary