

## ACTION MINUTES

### Group 3 Business Owners and Commercial Property Managers Stakeholder Interview Minutes

Tuesday, September 9, 2014

1. **Introductions** Senior Planner Cattan provided overview of the Zoning Code update process and stakeholder meetings.

Stakeholders present: Gary Wetsel, Merrie Anne Millar, Karl Rice, and Planning Commissioner Gayle Ortiz.  
Staff present: Community Development Director Grunow and Senior Planner Cattan

2. **Ease of Use.** Are there specific aspects of the existing Zoning Code that are unclear or difficult to understand? How could we make the code more user-friendly?
  - a. Search engine online is difficult to utilize to locate relevant information.
  - b. The information in the code sections is often unclear and requires staff guidance. Need to remove the uncertainty in the regulations and staff interpretation.
  - c. Table of Contents in printed version should be available online
  - d. A user's guide would be helpful to direct applicants to different standards
  - e. Clutter in code should be removed and language simplified.
3. **Development Standards and Regulations.** Are there specific development standards or land use regulations in existing code that have caused problems that should be revised? How do you suggest addressing these issues?
  - a. Update to reflect current standards and technology
  - b. Landscape regulations:
    - i. More flexibility to meet intent of code and come up with creative solutions.
    - ii. Tree planting policy
      1. Replanting policy of 2 for 1 is problematic in parking lots with limited planting space.
      2. Trees inherently problematic in parking lots: roots pull up asphalt, logistic of watering trees, cost of watering trees, and drought.
      3. Visibility. Goal of 30% canopy coverage on commercial properties is problematic as businesses want to be seen and trees screen view of businesses from right-of-way. Consider off-sets to allow businesses to plant trees elsewhere contributing to the canopy goals of the City without blocking visibility.
  - c. Create different commercial standards (uses, landscaping, signs, and parking) for the different commercial areas. 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Central Village, and Neighborhood Commercial.
  - d. Regulations should be consistent with other public agencies. (Fire Dept.)
  - e. Allow drive-thru on 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue.
  - f. Update design guidelines for 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue
4. **Commercial Area Issues.** Are there any zoning issues unique to commercial areas that need to be addressed?

- a. Commercial Uses that collect sales tax and TOT should be allowed along traffic corridors to maintain tax base. Medical has its place in retail but should either have a maximum % limit within an area or designate medical to specific areas. Storage facilities should not be located in commercial districts.
  - b. Avoid commercial leakage to County. Target example. Figure out what made Target site appealing vs. Home Depot location. Zone to allow what anchor businesses need. Visibility was identified as one reason for commercial leakage.
  - c. Rethink cross walk from new parking lot in village. Create a cross walk at the corner of Bluegum and Capitola to send visitors onto the side of the street with retail.
  - d. Roundabout at the corner of Bay and Capitola Avenue could have negative impacts on safety and commercial areas.
  - e. Clares Street and 41<sup>st</sup>. Create a right turning lane from Clares onto 41<sup>st</sup> to keep cars moving.
  - f. Reduce amount of lights at the 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue freeway.
  - g. Create solutions to existing problem sites (Rispin, Village parking, and Village hotel) within the updated code. Set up favorable standards.
5. **Sign Code.** Current sign regulations require a public hearing and an approximately \$700 cost for most sign applications. Staff intends to develop options to revise sign regulations. Would you generally prefer a process which 1) offers more design flexibility, but requires a public hearing and additional time and cost, or 2) an over-the-counter process which requires less time and cost, but offers less design flexibility?
- a. Visibility. Current code does not allow enough visibility from the street. Auto plaza, mall, and large shopping centers are impacted by sign code regulations.
  - b. Create different sign standards for the different commercial areas.
  - c. Central Village Pedestal Signs – remove. Ordinance does not work. Enforcement is an issue. Village should have consistency in rules and enforcement.
  - d. Enforcement of signs City-wide is an issue. Businesses that follow the rules are the ones that are punished. Banners are an issue. Sandwich boards create clutter.
  - e. Quality of signs influence perception of City overall. There is an impact on retail when quality is sacrificed. High quality provides better perception and more money is spent.
  - f. Directional signs should be allowed within larger developments.
  - g. Old signs should be required to be removed prior to installation of new signs.
6. **New Provisions.** Is the existing Zoning Code silent on any issues or uses that should be addressed in the Zoning Code? Do you know of provisions from other City codes that you think would improve the Capitola code and overall commercial development?
- a. Dublin, CA. New development is thriving. Car dealerships. Signs are great and maintains small town feel.
  - b. Old Town Pleasanton. Great signs. Small town feel.
7. **Outdoor Displays.** Outdoor displays are only allowed in the village with a conditional use permit. Should the new code set up regulations for outdoor displays in all commercial areas?
- a. Allow within set standards, including : time limitations, type of business, size of area, maintain necessary circulation for pedestrians and cars, etc.
  - b. Build integrity into process. Not just quantitative measure but qualitative measures too.
  - c. Separate outdoor dining regulations from outdoor display regulations. Support for more outdoor dining throughout Capitola.

8. **Permit Decision-Making Process.** Depending on the type of application, land use permits require approval by City staff, the Planning Commission, or City Council. Does the current code provide a fair and appropriate level of review of permit applications (i.e., should the Planning Commission review more or less project types)?
  - a. If a project complies with the code consider allowing administrative approval rather than public process. Also acknowledged that sometimes it is necessary to have a project come before the public even though it may comply.
  - b. Create clear expectations within code so there is less oversight necessary.
  - c. Staff discretion within permits should not be open to interpretations. New code must create consistency in review and avoid unfair allowances.
  
9. **Economic Development.** Are there changes we could make to the zoning code to promote economic development? Are there obstacles we could remove or incentives we could add to encourage positive redevelopment?
  - a. Support idea of Capitola Road connecting 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Village. Allow hotels along Capitola Road.
  - b. Incentives to bring in desired uses: Zone to allow desired uses, Waive fees
  - c. Capitola should identify the types of uses it would like to see within specific areas and remove unnecessary steps and uncertainty for such desired uses in identified areas.
  
10. **Sustainability.** The new code will place an increased emphasis on sustainability. Do you have any ideas for how can we promote sustainability principles, such as alternative transportation (bicycling and walking), reducing energy and water consumption, encouraging green energy sources, compact development patterns, etc.?
  
11. **Other Issues:** Are there any other issues with the zoning code you would like to tell us about?
  - a. Discussion on how does Capitola compare to surrounding areas for businesses. Watsonville is the most business friendly in terms of process. Santa Cruz is more difficult than Capitola. In Capitola, businesses expect more attention to be spent on the small details.
  
12. **Close.** Community Development Director Rich Grunow thanks the stakeholder participants and talks about next steps.