



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 5, 2010

To: Planning Commission

FROM: Jeremy McMahan, AICP, Planning Supervisor
Eric Shields, AICP, Planning Director

SUBJECT: Neighborhood Planning, Follow Up Discussion on
Recommendation to Council (File ZON10-00001, File No. 2)

RECOMMENDATION

Review and approve the text of the Planning Commission recommendation to the City Council regarding the importance of neighborhood planning.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

As part of the Commission's recommendations to the City Council on neighborhood boundaries, the Commission included a recommendation regarding the importance of neighborhood planning. The motion on this issue was made as follows:

Neighborhood planning is incredibly important and should proceed on the currently published schedule. Further, in order to achieve that, the Commission would like to like to have a 2011 work plan item to reconsider neighborhood boundaries city-wide.

In working with the Vice Chair, staff developed the following draft recommendation based on the motion:

Neighborhood planning is incredibly important, but it is a challenge to update individual neighborhood plans in a timely manner. Neighborhood plans often have not been updated for more than 20 years. Further, in order to achieve the currently published schedule, the Commission would like to have a 2011 work plan item to reconsider neighborhood boundaries city-wide. With the addition of two or three new neighborhoods, the challenge of cycling through neighborhood plan amendments in a timely manner will be compounded if efficiencies are not achieved.

On further review with the City Manager and Neighborhood Services Coordinator, staff is concerned that the recommendation as drafted is unnecessarily mixing neighborhood boundaries up with the desire to achieve planning efficiencies. As drafted, the inclusion of "reconsider neighborhood boundaries city-wide" in the recommendation implies potential consolidations of neighborhoods. In the discussions at the study session and hearing, the Commission discussed the concept of "planning units" as a way to aggregate neighborhoods for plan updates. This aggregation of neighborhoods into larger geographic units for planning purposes can be independent from the structure of neighborhoods for purposes of the City's neighborhood services program and neighborhood organizations.

In addition, the City Manager has pointed out that the current proposed budget cuts will likely reduce the capacity of neighborhood planning in the 2011-2012 budget period. If the Council approves that service reduction for the budget it will be important to redefine how this valued service is delivered to the neighborhoods – starting with the 2011 Planning Work Program as the Commission also suggested.

PROPOSED TEXT

Staff would suggest revisions to the recommendation to capture what we understand to be the Commission's concern and intent. This would be included in the Commission's memo to Council for December 7th.

Neighborhood planning is very important, but it is a challenge to update individual neighborhood plans in a timely manner. Neighborhood plans often have not been updated for more than 20 years. With the addition of two or three new neighborhoods and ongoing budget constraints, the challenge of cycling through neighborhood plan amendments in a timely manner will be compounded if efficiencies are not achieved. In order to establish a schedule of predictable and sustainable updates, the Commission would like to have a 2011 work plan item to develop a more efficient method of plan updates. This could include creation of "planning subareas" where updates are conducted for larger geographic areas of the City.

We would also recommend the inclusion of the following text in the Implementation Strategies Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan (shown amending existing text under Neighborhood Plans Project NP.1):

Regularly review neighborhood plans and amend as appropriate. Explore efficiencies in the neighborhood planning process to ensure a predictable and sustainable update cycle.

Cc: File ZON10-00001 (#2)