

PLAN COMMISSION

The Plan Commission of the City of LaPorte held an In-person meeting on March 8th, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. with Chairperson Jerry Jackson presiding and the following in attendance:

Jerry Jackson
Pete Saunders
Dr. David Porter
Miles Fettinger
Vickie Gushrowski
Julie West
Paul Vincent-Absent

Election of Officers:

Chairperson Jerry Jackson asked if there were any nominations for President. Miles Fettinger nominated Jerry Jackson. Pete Saunders 2nd the motion. Chairperson Jackson asked for a nomination for Vice President, Dr. David Porter nominated Miles Fettinger and Julie West 2nd the motion. A roll call vote was taken and resulted with Jerry Jackson as President and Miles Fettinger as Vice President.

Chairperson Jackson opened the floor to public comment on non-agenda items. There was no one from the public to comment on non-agenda items. That portion of the meeting was closed.

Chairperson Jackson asked the commission if they had a chance to review the March 9th meeting minutes and if there were any changes. There were not any. Julie West made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted and Miles Fettinger 2nd. The minutes were approved.

Zone Map Change #22-01 to rezone from R1B to R2A

Chairperson Jackson clarified that this board makes recommendations to the council such as favorable, unfavorable or no recommendation.

Craig Phillips the Director of Community Development and Planning began the presentation to the commission by starting the staff report.

Summary:

The petitioner proposes to Re-Zone from the R1B Single Family Residential District to the R2A Townhouse Residential District.

Concurrence:

The Zoning Ordinance allows for rezoning following a public hearing, Plan Commission review and recommendation, and adoption by the City Common Council.

History of the site:

Per the site aerial image, the two parcels combined are 4.88 acres and currently zoned R1B (Single Family Residential District). Historically, the properties have not been developed. The subject property lies on the south side of West 18th Street.

Site Review:

Site Review is not required for Zone Map Change applications.

Statement of compliance:

Section 27.12 of the 2017 Revised Joint Zoning Ordinance states that the Plan Commission shall be guided by and consider the general policy and pattern of development set out in the Countywide Land Development Plan. The Countywide Land Development encourages infill and redevelopment of land within city limits that is compatible with the existing neighborhood and a variety of housing types to maintain affordability for residents.

Staff Analysis:

The City of La Porte is initiating a rezoning of two parcels owned by the city from the R1B Single Family Residential District to the R2A Townhouse Residential District. Parcel 1 contains approximately 2.68 Acres and Parcel 2 contains approximately 2.20 Acres; both along the south side of West 18th Street. The City of La Porte is requesting this zone map change for the purpose of offering the properties for development of single family, single family attached, two family, or townhouse residential dwelling units. The proposed R2A Townhouse Residential Zoning District allows a greater variety of residential land uses by-right and the necessary flexibility to develop the properties for the intended purpose. The proposed density serves as an appropriate transition from the two-family attached residential dwelling units zoned R3A and commercial uses zoned B2 catacorner to the northeast across West 18th St. to the undeveloped land zoned R1B to the south as well as the existing single-family dwellings located on each side of the subject properties. The intent for the proposed residential development is for residential units with alley access from 18th Street to minimize the number of individual driveway approaches along the West 18th street frontage.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff finds that the proposed rezoning of Parcel 1 and 2 conforms to the goals and policies of the County Land Development Plan and City of La Porte Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Staff recommends approval of Zone Map Change #22-01 Petition to rezone Parcel 1 and 2 from the R1B Single Family Residential District to the R2A Townhouse Residential District.

Mr. Phillips pointed out that the board had copies of the aerial photo that shows location of property and the surrounding properties. There was also a map showing the existing and proposed zoning. Parcel description and surveys were also included and finally a schematic of what possible development could look like which is dependent on-site plan that would go through site plan review and normal development review procedures and permitting. The photo was just shown reference purposes.

Mr. Phillips went on to explain this is a city owned property that was acquired by a land swap with La Porte Community Schools. The school was planning to use the property for other uses that could have generated more traffic than what the City is proposing for residential uses. R2-A serves as a buffer between the more intense R3-A and R1-B zoning in this area. The current zoning R1-B would allow 8 single family homes with 8 individual driveways onto 18th Street and there would be nothing we could do about that. It would be allowed by right. The proposal we have given and the way we intend to develop the property would have 2 access points rather than the 8 there by more compatibility with surrounding properties but with a reduction of number of access points and potential conflict points which is a concern on 18th Street and since we just recently installed the 18th Street Greenway project. We also just recently completed the 1st phase of a housing study with the County and the City of Michigan City. That study indicated the need for housing of all types in all 3 communities. We are looking for a developer for the entire property and we are hoping to put this out for proposals early spring or summer. We are not requesting a multi-family zoning. This would be single family detached, single family attached also known as duplexes or row houses, or townhouses. If the rezoning is successful, the number of units per acre that is allowed whether this is done as any

of the fore-mentioned housing is the same it's just a matter of how the units are placed on the individual properties. We believe this in compliance with the county wide land development plan.

Chairperson Jackson opened the floor to Plan Commission for questions or comments.

Dr. David Porter asked if R2-A allowing more than 2 units per building?

Mr. Worthley answered the questions with under R2-A two buildings would be the maximum per lot.

Pete Saunders asked since there will be two access points, will the parking be in the rear?

Craig Phillips answered that there would be rear parking off a shared alley.

Miles Fettinger asked what size of a water main down 18th Street?

Jerry Jackson answered the question by stating he didn't know off the top of his head, but that Tim Werner (Water Super) stated that there is sufficient water there. Mr. Fettinger also asked where the sewer line is located. Jerry Jackson answered that sewer is a little more involved. There is storm sewer but not sanitary sewer. There is planning to extend low pressure sewer through that segment and that was in place before this project came along that was going to serve the parcels from this project to "I" Street. They are spaced out and lower than the gravity sewers in the area and currently plan to extend that project to this area. Mr. Fettinger stated that there is a guy who lives across from the shopping center and states there is no sewer for him to hook up to and asked if this would allow the two residents in that area to hook into. Mr. Jackson responded that they would be able to connect with this project. Mr. Jackson explained that this the same type of sewer that was placed on Lakeside Street. It is suitable for places that don't have access to gravity sewer or high-water table. Mr. Fettinger asked if this would be City owned or if each unit would have to own? Mr. Jackson stated that the city would own the pump stations. Mr. Fettinger asked if the alley access would be City alley? Mr. Phillips said the alley could be designed to City standards and turned over to the City through Board of Works or if it is a private alley, it would still be designed with City standards because of the development agreement process we would be able to negotiate higher standards and higher expectations because of the develop agreement. It was established that there would be a homeowner's association. Mrs. Gushrowski asked if the city would have lead way of what the houses will look like, Mr. Phillips answered within reason. Mr. Phillips also stated that he has been in contact with the homeowners on either side as well as other various staff and are working with them on various requests that they have regarding property lines.

Chairman Jackson opened the floor to public comment.

Bert Sappenfield of 104 Regency Parkway across the street. She asked where the alley access will be, and she is concerned about the traffic on 18th Street especially if there could be 8 individual driveways. She also asked if there is going to be any kind of cost factor for people purchasing the proposed homes.

Steve Curry of 107 Regency Parkway and is the President of the Homeowners Association for Regency. He asked if there was a traffic study or analysis done because Regency only has one way in and one way out and during school hours its difficult to navigate. He also asked what the definition of low-rise town is, Mr. Worthley answered the question by saying the maximum height in R-2A is 40 ft the maximum height with the current zoning is 35 ft so the zoning change would change the height by 5 ft.

Bert Cook Executive Director of LEAP stated that this project has been a priority and thanked the La Porte Community School Corporation and Mayor Dermody for making this possible to help further our goals of expanding housing in the City of La Porte. Mr. Cook stated that if this is developed as single-family homes, this would allow each home an individual driveway and with this development plan we have would use the alleyway concept which will help with the traffic issues and gives us the opportunity to help aide the development. We would appreciate your support with this project, and we are excited to get this project going.

Russ Jensen of 519 W 18th Street asked how many units they plan to put in, Mr. Worthley explained that the proposal is for a zone map change, and we are just here to determine whether to change the zoning of the property. Mr. Jensen asked if there could 3 of the duplexes put on the property. Mr. Worthley explained that the maximum is two units per lot under this zoning classification. He also explained that if more than two units were desired, a variance would need to be applied for.

Mr. Phillips addressed the questions all at once. Regarding alley access, we would try to locate the alley access points in areas with the least amount of conflict to properties adjacent or properties across. Regarding Regency, the safest thing to do would be to line up the alley access point exactly with the entry for Regency. This would be the safest rather than offsetting which could cause issues with turning. He pointed out when he was speaking about 8 homes, that is what would be allowed if the zoning remains, and the changing of the zone map does not occur. The cost factor to potential homeowners is market rate housing and low income as defined by HUD. About a traffic analysis or study, we did not conduct a full-blown traffic analysis, but he stated that if this was to be developed as a sub-division it would result in a much larger number of homes that could be developed on the property causing more traffic. If the City didn't own this property other uses could have been churches or when the school corporation owned this property could have been school facilities that would have generated way more traffic than what is being proposed here. Low-rise townhouse is defined in the Zoning Ordinance which is available on the City's website. Mr. Phillips pointed out that there is not currently a zoning district that restricts development to one story, R1-B allows 1 or 2 story homes up to 35 ft and as Mr. Worthley mentioned 40 ft for townhouses. The questions regarding the number of units, he explained that R2-A zoning would allow 50 ft wide lots and if this was to be developed as single-family units it allows the lots to be narrower than that per unit. If you do townhouse development but again the number of units total that can be built on the property is 8 units per acre regardless of the type of housing that is built on the property overall. Essentially it would be a difference of how you place the homes on the property as opposed to the number of units that would be permitted if the R2-A zoning is approved.

Bert Sappenfield of 104 Regency asked if the housing would be placed toward the back of the lot, Mr. Phillips answered by saying that the homes will be placed just like all the other homes but would have alley access behind the homes. Mr. Jackson reminded the public that this is just a concept and the only thing this board is doing is making recommendation on the zoning. Mr. Phillips confirmed that this a concept and the plan is to put out a request for proposals to developers that would be very detailed in terms of what they submit to us for consideration. The decision of who we would award the project or the ability to transfer the property to a developer would have to be approved by the City and that is a public process.

Jo Happel of 129 Regency asked if this could be developed by Habitat for Humanity, Mr. Phillips responded that HUD's definition of affordable housing is a specific definition that is 30 to 60 percent of our area median income and this specific project would go at market rate and a standard developer would come in and build. Ms. Happel explained that market rate fluctuates and then asked how many

square feet each unit will be, Mr. Phillips explained that this district requires 1,000 sq feet or larger. He explained that there is no maximum it would be based on the other requirements of the district such as setback and maximum lot coverage allowed and the amount of pervious or impervious surface which is hard surface vs soft surface. Mr. Worthley explained that the square footage with the current zoning and the proposed zoning are the same. Ms. Happel explained that the traffic around 2:30 pm is horrible and she refuses to use "A" Street during school hours because she can not get home. Mr. Phillips explained that the city is aware of the school traffic that is generated.

Joanne Sager of 111 Regency stated that in the morning it is hard to get out and get back at the corner of "A" and 18th Street until approximately 8:00 am. She asked if the sewers capable of handling the added housing, Mr. Jackson answered by saying that there is not currently sewers on 18th Street however the developer would put in sewage across the development and the City would get the parcels to the west. Ms. Sager asked if there is storm sewer and water? Mr. Jackson answered that there are storm sewers and water available. Ms. Sager asked the conditions of the pipes, Mr. Fettinger answered that they were installed in 1988 as he helped install them.

Russ Jensen 519 W 18th Street asked if there was or is there any consideration of a type of road that comes off "A" Street? Mr. Phillips explained that we were unable to get enough land to make that happen which is why alley access is being proposed. Mr. Jensen asked if the alley be two or four lanes, Mr. Phillips told him the alley would be a standard city alley designed to City standards. Mr. Phillips reminded the public that Plan Commission only makes recommendations of the Zone Map changes and all the details will be discussed during the sub-division process.

Bert Sappenfield of 104 Regency Parkway asked if there will be an HOA and Mr. Phillips stated that there can be a Homeowners Association if there are common areas or common facilities that need maintained. Ms. Sappenfield stated that she is in favor of an HOA and likes having one in her neighborhood.

Unidentified person asked the time frame for this project. Mr. Phillips stated he intends to put this out for proposals late Spring early Summer and then the negotiation process can't be identified.

Tim Daniels of 108 W 18th Street asked if the public would be notified of what is being built, Mr. Worthley answered that the zone map change is the only thing being proposed at this meeting. Anything else would require more action through this board and potentially the board of zoning appeals, and that notice would be given. It was explained that any of the public processes involved with this notice would be given. Public comment was closed.

Mr. Jackson asked if there were any more questions from the board. Mr. Fettinger asked what the rule on parking is on 18th Street. Mr. Phillips stated that he didn't want to miss speak but believes that there is no parking on 18th Street and the City does not intend to have parking on 18th Street.

Miles Fettinger made a motion to make a favorable recommendation to the City Council for the Zone Map Change to R2-A. Julie West 2nd the motion. Role call vote was taken motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Appoint a Plan Commission member to the downtown design review committee. Mr. Fettinger nominated Vickie Gushrowski and Julie West 2nd the motion. Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

2022 Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance updates were tabled until next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Mr. Fettinger made a motion to adjourn, Dr. Porter 2nd the motion. Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerry Jackson, President

Jamie Novak, Secretary