



# City of Blaine

## City Council Workshop

---

April 17, 2023 | 5:30 PM  
Blaine City Hall  
10801 Town Square Drive NE  
Blaine, MN 55449

### MINUTES

#### NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

In accordance with the provisions of Section 3.01 of the Blaine City Charter, a Council Workshop meeting is scheduled for the following purpose:

#### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 5:30PM.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Terra Fleming (attending remotely from 11211 Commercial Centre Loop in Yuma, Arizona 85367), Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, Jess Robertson, and Lori Saroya.

**ABSENT:** None.

Quorum Present.

**ALSO PRESENT:** City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Eric Thorvig; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Deputy Finance Director Ali Bong; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Tom Loonan; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Director of Public Works Nick Fleischhacker; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

#### 2. New Business

- 2.1.** 2023-138 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05(2)(a)(2) - Personnel Matter

*Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager*

Motion by Councilmember Newland, seconded by Councilmember Massoglia, to move to closed session to discuss a personnel matter. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion to reopen the City Council meeting at 5:50PM.

- 2.2.** 2023-129 Northtown Presentation Damon Farber

Community Development Director Thorvig reported Damon Farber, the consultant that prepared the master plan for Northtown had a presentation for the Council on how the vision was created, public involvement and implementation.

Tom Whitlock, Damon Farber, discussed the history of shopping malls and how retail shopping has evolved. He explained suburban malls were facing challenges throughout the country. He commented on the work he had done on the Ridgedale and Burnsville malls.

Jeff McMenimen, Damon Farber, shared a presentation that addressed the vision, guiding principles and phasing for the Northtown Redevelopment Area. He commented on the project timeline, noting work began in July of 2021. He described the public engagement that was conducted for the study and noted the public was thanked the City was conducting this study. He reviewed the comments received from the public, the mall owners and Kraus Anderson. Both short term and long-term actions for the City were discussed.

Mr. Whitlock commented on the myths that surround multi-family housing. He noted there are ways to control the design of high-density developments through design guidelines. He reported the population was changing, Blaine was becoming more diverse, and some residents in the community would prefer to live in high density housing. He provided further comment on how other communities were controlling the design of multi-family housing.

Councilmember Newland questioned if the plans for Burnsville Mall were driven by the cities. Mr. Whitlock reported the redevelopment plans for both Burnsville and Ridgedale were driven by the cities. He indicated the mall owners participated in the conversations and were invested in the plans. He stated these properties, along with Northtown, were complex with multiple property owners.

Councilmember Newland asked if the Northtown Mall owner was engaged in this process. Mr. Whitlock believed this to be the case. He noted the challenge was these were large real estate companies that were facing challenges across the country and to get their attention, the City had to be a partner. Mr. Thorvig stated the mall owners were engaged initially but has not been engaged in the process in the last six months.

Councilmember Newland stated the housing portion of the project was a concern to many residents in Blaine. He wondered if the multi-family perception information shared with the Council should be put out to the entire City. Mr. Whitlock anticipated every community struggled with this perception and there were examples in this region of new, successful, multi-family housing projects surrounding malls. Mr. McMenimen reported both Ridgedale and Rosedale had multi-family housing

projects around their malls. He commented further on how a mall in Colorado was revitalized, noting it takes time to redevelop these spaces.

Councilmember Newland questioned if a hotel was part of the redevelopment plans for Northtown. Mr. McMenimen stated lodging was proposed near County Road 10 on the Kraus Anderson site.

Councilmember Saroya explained she lived in Ward 1 and this was her neighborhood. She indicated this was something she has been paying attention to and was very excited to see the vision for this area. She stated this was the older part of Blaine then asked if there was any intention to keep this culture in place by bringing in art and history. Mr. McMenimen stated this could be included within the open spaces. He reported the shops within the new buildings could be reflective of the cultural diversity within the community. Mr. Whitlock stated the challenge with the master plan was that it was at a higher level but through the implementation the plan, this could be addressed.

Councilmember Saroya stated she would like to see Ward 1 retain its history and culture. She commented on the housing issue and asked if the residents of Ward 1 wanted more housing. She noted she knocked on more than 5,000 doors during her campaign and heard that Ward 1 residents did not want their neighborhoods urbanized. She said while she supported the proposed plan, she wanted more time to speak to the residents in her ward to better understand what they want.

Councilmember Robertson questioned how long Rosedale has been in the redevelopment process. Mr. McMenimen reported Rosedale has been redeveloping over the past six years.

Councilmember Robertson asked what happens when a city invests in the redevelopment process for a shopping mall area. Mr. Whitlock noted this was a significant piece of real estate and every mall owner was being faced with big challenges at this time. He learned in Burnsville that the timing of the project was a tricky and complex effort. He believed the best redevelopments happen incrementally over time. Mr. McMenimen commented further on how retail was evolving which was impacting all shopping mall areas.

Councilmember Robertson explained part of the master plan involved Coon Rapids, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley, which meant the City asked these communities for feedback be Northtown served as their commercial hub as well. She appreciated the fact Councilmember Saroya wanted to preserve the culture of this area. She indicated she did not like all the dense housing but understood the heights of the building could be addressed. She recommended more senior housing be considered for this area. She discussed how this plan was a living document and anticipated changes would be made along the way. Lastly, she supported the community continuing to be involved in the redevelopment process.

Mr. Whitlock discussed how the market would assist in driving redevelopment surrounding the mall area. He indicated single family homes may be too expensive for this area. He stated he looked forward to working with the City through this process. He explained he would be happy to bring the Burnsville City planner in to speak with the Council.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. McMenimen and Mr. Whitlock for their presentation.

### 3.3 Northtown Retail District Report.

Safety Services Director/Police Chief Podany provided the Council with a presentation on the Northtown Retail District Report. He discussed how the City was broken into districts and how there was a disproportionate number of calls in the Northtown area. He commented on how his officers were working to reduce crime and create a positive environment, while minimizing victimization. He reviewed the data from the last couple of years and noted he has seen a reduction in serious crime. He explained because there was an increase in presence around the mall, there has been an increase in calls and self-initiated traffic stops. He discussed the crime data for Northtown compared to Maplewood and Rosedale. He reported Northtown has more calls for service per capita and traffic stops than these other two malls, while Maplewood had more robberies. He provided further comment on how the department was working to increase the feeling of safety in the area surrounding the mall, noting security at the mall had been cut.

Councilmember Newland questioned if the Northtown carnival in May would have security this summer. Police Chief Podany reported reimbursable patrol services would be required this year.

Mayor Sanders thanked Police Chief Podany for the update and stated he appreciated all the efforts of the Blaine police officers.

#### **2.3. 2023-118 Northtown Retail District Report**

*Sponsors: Brian Podany, Safety Services Manager/Police Chief*

Chief provided a summary of calls for service for the Northtown retail district including traffic stops, reports of homelessness, Northtown security detail, etc.

### **3. Other Business**

#### **3.1. 2023-144 Staff Updates**

*Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager*

City Manager Wolfe explained staff would email an update to the Council on well interference status. She reported it was possible an individual may be present to speak at open forum regarding a confidential investigation then commented on

rules of order/code of conduct noting several updates/housekeeping matters will be shared in the near future.

**4. Adjournment**

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:52PM.