



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

September 6, 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 at 5:30PM.

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders (arrived at 5:43 PM), Councilmembers Terra Fleming, Leslie Larson, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, Jess Robertson, and Lori Saroya.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Police Captain Russ Clark; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; City Attorney Tom Loonan; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

2. New Business

- 2.1.** 2023-386 Zoning Discussion for 8643 Central Avenue NE.
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, City Planner

City Planner Sellman stated the subject site is comprised of three parcels that contain a commercial building (Uram Insurance) and vacant land. The existing building was built in 1972. The three properties are under the same ownership. One property (8628 Central Avenue) is zoned R-1 (Single Family Residential) and guided Low Density Residential in the Comprehensive Plan. The property does not have street frontage and is only developable when combined with the parcel that fronts the Central Avenue frontage road. The property at 8634 Central Avenue is split between two zoning classifications, B-2 (Community Commercial) and R-1, but is entirely guided Community Commercial. The third property

abuts the Central Avenue frontage road and is zoned B-2 and guided Community Commercial. The property to the north is developed with a multi-tenant commercial building (Batteries Plus and a salon) and the parcel to the south is also developed with a commercial building (Caliber Collision). The parcels to the west are single-family residential. Staff explained the applicant was proposing self storage for these properties and requested feedback from the council on how to proceed.

Scott Uram, property owner, explained he has been in this building since 1996 and was born in Blaine. He stated he was trying to do something different with this space, while trying to appease Blaine. He reported he was proposing to use solar, recycle water and offer electric charging stations.

Josh McKinny, development consulting firm representative, thanked staff for the presentation. He understood there was some consternation regarding self-storage and car wash uses. He commented on the uses that would be allowed on site which included a pet daycare. He asked the council to consider if self-storage was an appropriate use in the B-2 zoning district for this property. He explained they were not proposing a one-story building that would be surrounded by chain link fencing but a high quality self-storage product.

Councilmember Larson asked if the storage facility would be multi-level. Mr. McKinny reported this was the case. He commented further on the architectural plans for this facility and noted a similar climate-controlled self-storage facility exists on Central Avenue north of this project.

Councilmember Robertson questioned what the current and applicable uses would be for this site. Ms. Sellman reviewed the permitted uses for this property which included a salon, dry cleaning, professional offices, fitness, art studio, retail, banks, brew pubs, repair services, medical, cannabis dispensary, along with a list of conditional uses.

Mr. Uram stated the list of uses was not feasible from a marketability standpoint. He reported he looked at a hotel, but the site's shape and layout didn't lend itself to that use.

Councilmember Newland questioned how much of the city was zoned B-2. Ms. Sellman indicated the majority of the properties along Highway 65 were zoned B-2 or B-3, along with the properties along 125th.

Councilmember Newland stated by changing the allowed uses for the B-2 zoning district, this would make self-storage an allowed use up and down the TH65 corridor and along 125th. He explained this was the reason the zoning code was amended to limit self-storage to the heavy industrial zoning district. He reported it was the desired intent of the past city council to not allow self storage in the B-2 and B-3 zoning districts and he supported this recommendation going forward.

Councilmember Massoglia thanked the developer for his presentation and for sharing his thoughts with the council. He commented on how the council was working to elevate the TH65 corridor. He reported he would be more favorable to the conditional uses for this B-2 property and would not support self storage. He stated he wanted to help the developer find a use but noted now was not the time to add a use back into the B-2 zoning district.

Councilmember Saroya indicated she was new to the council and explained she lived not too far from this area. She asked if Mr. Uram's office would be removed from the development. Mr. Uram explained his office would be moved to the front of the proposed self-storage building.

Councilmember Saroya questioned if the applicant had looked into putting a restaurant on this site. Mr. Uram stated he had and noted this was not the right site for a restaurant.

Councilmember Saroya inquired if this property would work for a coffee shop. Mr. McKinny reported because this property did not have direct or right-in/right-out access to TH65 a coffee shop would be challenging. Mr. Uram noted 3.3 acres was quite large for a coffee shop.

Councilmember Saroya suggested the applicant consider creating a co-working space with a coffee shop noting there was a large number of Blaine residents working from home now. Mr. Uram commented on how he has been evaluating uses for this property since 2021 and has been unable to identify other uses.

Councilmember Newland indicated he supported the secondary use as a car wash. Mr. Uram commented he was proposing a full service car wash that would accommodate larger vehicles that would also have EV stations. He stated he would like to keep a business in Blaine, given the fact he has had his business in Blaine since the 1990s.

Councilmember Fleming reported this was a unique and difficult piece of land to develop. She explained she was new to the council. She stated she appreciated the fact the storage would go deeper into the site and not be visible from TH65, but rather the frontage along the corridor would be professional and office-like. She indicated she was not against car washes, but supported them when put in appropriate places.

Councilmember Larson questioned if the self storage would be in an "L" shape. Mr. Uram reported this was the case. He commented further on the proposed self-storage site plan, noting the location of the uses, existing trees and adjacent homes.

Councilmember Saroya stated it appears self-storage was a quiet use, which would be nice given the fact this property abuts residential homes. Mr. Uram indicated this was the case.

Councilmember Saroya asked if self-storage was allowed in this area, would it have to be allowed on all B-2 properties. Ms. Sellman explained if the council approved an ordinance amendment, self-storage would be allowed on all B-2 properties in Blaine. She reported the only way to allow self-storage on this property would be to rezone it Heavy Industrial (I-2A).

Mr. McKinny encouraged the council to consider allowing self-storage as a conditional use. He explained this would allow the city council to put parameters in place regarding the use. Mr. Uram commented on the numerous restrictions that were placed on Caliber Collision when approved as a conditional use.

Mayor Sanders questioned how the council should move forward with this item. Ms. Sellman questioned if there was consensus of the council to support changing the B-2 zoning district to allow self-storage.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she was the only councilmember on the council when the zoning was changed along TH65. She stated there was an influx of requests for mini storage and the city was getting push back from residents. She reported the only mechanism the council has in place to steer development was zoning. She stated she would not be in favor of amending the zoning code at this time because it would open up the entire TH65 corridor for self-storage.

Mayor Sanders thanked the applicant for bringing forward a proposal that would elevate Blaine. He explained he appreciated the applicant's investment in Blaine over the years. However, he reported the consensus of the council was not to support an amendment to the B-2 zoning district at this time.

Council consensus was to not support amending the ordinance to allow public storage facilities for the B-2 Community Commercial zoning district.

2.2. 2023-385 Zoning Ordinance Discussion for Northtown Redevelopment Area (Part 1)
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, City Planner

Ms. Sellman stated the city council has discussed land use in the Northtown area at various workshop meetings this year. The land use plan guides at a high level the type of development (commercial, residential, mixed use, etc), and the zoning ordinance specifically identifies what uses are allowed and the bulk zoning requirements (setbacks, height, etc). The adopted Northtown Redevelopment Vision Plan provides actions steps. One of the short-term action steps (1-5 years) is to "Change Zoning to Mixed-Use" and states "Existing zoning in the study area is predominately defined as Regional Commercial (B-3). The city should act to change the zoning in the district to allow a greater mix of land uses, including residential, commercial, and civic." Staff noted the discussion of the council should focus on uses and development parameters so staff can draft a new mixed use district for the Northtown Area.

Councilmember Newland asked how the new mall ownership was responding to the proposed changes surrounding the Northtown Mall. Ms. Sellman explained she spoke with the new owners and they do have an idea of what they would like to do in the Northtown area. She noted they would like to keep the Community Commercial zoning in place, along with quick service restaurants as well as a hotel and convenience store without gas.

Further discussion ensued regarding the allowed and conditional uses for areas guided commercial in the the Northtown Area. Staff described how they were proposing to create a whole new zoning ordinance for the Northtown Area, similar to what was done for the 105th Redevelopment Area.

Councilmember Massoglia supported the city creating a new zoning district for the whole mall area, with the outlying areas being zoned to line up with the comp plan. Ms. Sellman reported in order to remain consistent with the plan that was adopted for the Northtown Area, the zoning would have to be changed for the outlying areas.

City Attorney Loonan discussed how all current businesses would be allowed to remain in operation as legal non-conforming uses and would only cease to operate if the business stopped for one year.

The council supported general retail, banks, brew pubs, restaurants, personal services (including massage), dry cleaning and laundry, repair (excluding vehicle repair), business and professional offices (including medical), personal instruction services and fitness (4,000 square feet), portrait and art studio, medical cannabis dispensary, tap room, amusement and recreation, gas station without car wash, bowling alleys, dance hall, daycare centers, specialized educational uses (tutoring), meeting and event space, hotels, private clubs, restaurants with live entertainment, off sale liquor stores, places of worship, and skating rinks in the Northtown Area.

The council did not support animal hospital, vehicle sales lot, minor auto repair, boat sales and display, car washes, contractors yard, schools or charter schools, manufactured home sales lot, recreational vehicle lot and sales office, small equipment rental, adult uses, domestic animal uses, major auto repair, funeral homes, vehicle rental with 15 cars onsite, and vocational/trade schools in the Northtown Area.

Mayor Sanders stated he supported smaller gym type uses in the Northtown Area but wanted to move away from the larger fitness uses.

Councilmember Massoglia expressed concern with the fact the council was not supporting minor auto repair and car dealerships for this area. He supported some of the outlying properties allowing for auto repair.

Mayor Sanders stated he was thinking long term and wanted to see elevated uses in this area that supported the vision for the Northtown Area. He hoped the entire area would have more mixed use and retail that was amenity driven over the next 30 years.

Councilmember Newland supported removing auto uses for now and noted the council could bring this back in the future if it made sense.

Councilmember Larson indicated she could support an Aveda trade school in the Northtown Area and noted this type of use would create additional commerce for the area. Ms. Sellman stated she would look at the language to see how it could be amended to support non-industrial trade schools.

Council provided feedback on uses for the new zoning district and directed staff to compile responses for further review at the next workshop.

3. Other Business

City Manager Wolfe shared updates and calendar invitations with the council. She explained the painting of the freedom rock in Veterans Memorial Park would occur over the next several weeks. She then welcomed new Finance Director Jason Zimmerman to the city of Blaine.

Council reviewed agenda order of items for the upcoming council meeting.

4. Adjournment



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:56 PM.