

**Birmingham City Commission-Planning Board Minutes October  
21, 2024**

**Department of Public Works 851  
S. Eton 7:30 p.m.**

**Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/1021906786>**

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Katie Schafer, Mayor Pro Tem, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Commission

ROLL CALL: Present: Mayor Pro Tem Schafer  
Commissioner Baller  
Commissioner Haig  
Commissioner Host  
Commissioner Longe  
Absent: Mayor McLain  
Commissioner Long

Planning Board

ROLL CALL: Present: Chair Scott Clein  
Robin Boyle  
Bert Koseck  
Janelle Whipple-Boyce  
Bryan Williams  
Jason Emerine, alternate  
Absent: Stuart Jeffares  
Daniel Share  
Nasseem Ramin, alternate

Staff: City Manager Ecker; Deputy City Clerk Brown, Planning Director Dupuis, City Attorney Kucharek

**10-569-24 Nomination of Temporary Mayor**

**MOTION:** Motion by Longe:  
To nominate Katie Schafer to be temporary Mayor.

VOICE VOTE: Ayes, MPT Schafer  
Commissioner Haig  
Commissioner Baller  
  
Commissioner Longe  
Commissioner Host  
Nays, None

**10-570-24 Nomination of Temporary Mayor Pro Tem**

**MOTION:** Motion by Baller:  
Nominate Therese Longe as Mayor Pro Tem.

VOICE VOTE: Ayes, tMayor Schafer  
Commissioner Haig

Commissioner Baller  
Commissioner Longe Commissioner  
Host

Nays, None

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public comment occurred after each discussion topic.

**IV. DISCUSSION TOPICS**

A. Triangle District Additional Bonus Height Provisions

PD Dupuis presented the item and answered informational questions.

Commissioners and Planning Board members raised the following points during discussion:

- There needs to be clarity on what level of density the City seeks to incentivize.
- Bonus height should not be easy to obtain.
- Incentivizing lot combinations may be appropriate within the Triangle District.
- It would be helpful to know whether it would be worthwhile to offer incentives beyond height.
- 'Planning gain' is another way to refer to bonus height requirements or incentives, since they represent a community gain stemming from the planning process. This was implemented in Birmingham in order to gain more than private development would otherwise offer, and that remains the present reason for recommending it. Public amenities, greener buildings, parking, and more affordable housing would be some worthwhile planning gains.
- Many of the lots in the Triangle are mid-block and relatively small. Some of the proposed options for achieving bonus height may be unrealistic for such properties.
- While developers may be interested in acquiring neighboring properties, neighboring properties may not always be available for purchase because some landlords hold their properties without developing them.
- Detroit recently changed the way vacant and unused properties are taxed, in order to encourage their development. Birmingham could consider a similar approach.
- Some developments within the Triangle have occurred subsequent to lot combinations. There are specific areas within the Triangle that would support additional lot combinations and height.
- It is likely that some residents within the single family residential areas of the Triangle, and adjacent to the Triangle, will not want to see increased density on their streets.
- The aim is to increase the community benefits gained in exchange for bonus heights, which is why changes to the bonus height provisions are being recommended.
- Incentive zoning is appropriate when a government wants to achieve a goal or a series of goals that the market, otherwise, would not be ready to bear. It became appropriate to update the City's incentives for bonus height.
- LEED certification became a less appropriate option because City and State building codes largely result in similar sustainability to lower-level LEED certification. Additionally, certification occurs after the building has been finished, and prohibiting a building from using the bonus height if certification does not occur presents challenges.
- It is the Board's intent to refine the definition of 'commercial'.
- Birmingham is expensive to develop in, due to expensive land and robust ordinances. When developers are afforded the opportunity to achieve bonus heights, they are better able to also afford to provide public goods in exchange.
- Incentive zoning is likely the only way the City will achieve some of the proposed public goods.
- As far as other incentives for developers, permit processing times, fees, and other aspects could be considered.

- It might be worth exploring whether the City could permit the sale of a transfer of development rights by a historic property owner to a developer seeking to develop in the Triangle, which would afford the developer bonus height.
- The City should encourage development in the Triangle using all available and appropriate methods.
- Some aspects of sustainability should be required, and the City's new sustainability board should recommend what those aspects will be.
- Affordable/Attainable/Moderately Priced Housing should be moved to the top of the list, as it will enable younger families to move into Birmingham which would benefit the whole community.
- Finding ways to encourage publicly accessible green spaces in the Triangle would also be worthwhile.
- Affordable/Attainable/Moderately Priced Housing could also prove a difficult topic to navigate.
- Michigan has experienced negative population growth in a number of recent years. More commercial space may not be necessary in the near future. SEMCOG's growth predictions may not be borne out, and there may be more empty units presently than presumed.
- Creating Affordable/Attainable/Moderately Priced Housing that the City has to manage the pricing of could be challenging, but encouraging developers to consider certain smaller-sized units could be appropriate. Lowering the parking requirements for multifamily housing could also be explored as a way of creating more affordable housing.
- Increased density can be handled thoughtfully in terms of its traffic impacts.
- If less multifamily parking is required, payment in lieu of parking should remain as an option for obtaining bonus heights.

#### Public Comment

David Bloom commented regarding affordable and attainable housing, how density impacts transit, and how changes in the Triangle might relate to other parts of the City.

#### B. The Birmingham Plan 2040

PD Dupuis presented the item. Staff answered informational questions.

Commissioners and Planning Board members raised the following points during discussion:

- Next steps for implementing the 2040 Plan should likely be, in order, a zoning overhaul that would require an outside consultant; parking, which would also require an outside consultant; and a study of reducing traffic and speeds along the Woodward corridor.
- Commissioners shared support for annually spending between \$75,000 and \$125,000 on projects to implement the 2040 Plan.
- A summary of the likely topics that would be covered in zoning and parking reviews was given.
- The Commission would need to determine what other City projects may have to be delayed in order to fund the 2040 Plan implementation.
- It is unlikely that other City boards would regularly be requesting significant amounts of funding for projects, and so putting funding towards annual implementation of the 2040 Plan may not be prohibitive.
- When more expensive homes are built in place of less expensive homes, tax revenue increases. Some residents would like more clarity on how those increased tax revenues are allocated.
- A potential public project review process was described, and Board members recommended that the Next/YMCA project be used as a trial of the potential process.
- Commissioners shared support for using the Next/YMCA project as an opportunity to trial a public review process. The review would go beyond a courtesy review, and would comprise recommendations to the Commission.

Public Comment

David Bloom commented regarding funding both for the Next/YMCA project and for the 2040 Plan’s implementation.

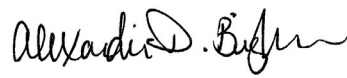
**V. COMMUNICATIONS**

Commissioners were advised to submit any questions regarding the Next/YMCA project in writing to the City Manager so that the topic could be more fully addressed at the October 28, 2024 Commission meeting.

Commissioner Host thanked City board/committee members who serve on both the Ad Hoc Senior/Recreation Center Committee and on a regular board.

**VI. ADJOURN**

The Commission motioned to adjourn at 9:19 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist