

**City of Kenmore
Planning Commission Meeting
August 18, 2020 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Planning Commission Members – In Attendance (the meeting was held virtually using the Zoom online platform)

Mark Ohrenschall, Chair
Carol Baker
Suzanne Greathouse
Nathan Loutsis
Mike Mulcare
Dennis Olson
Mike Vanderlinde

Consultants & Staff

Lauri Anderson, Principal Planner
Debbie Bent, Community Development Director
Bryan Hampson, Development Services Director
Maura Query, Administrative Assistant

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Ohrenschall at 7:00 p.m.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments at this meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the August 4, 2020 Planning Commission Minutes was made by Commissioner Olson and seconded by Commissioner Greathouse. The minutes were approved unanimously by a roll call vote.

4. AGENDA ITEMS

The Planning Commission continued to discuss the Affordable Housing Review Process. City Staff provided information requested from the August 4, 2020 meeting regarding the different types of permits and the Development Services process.

The three types of permits that might apply to Affordable Housing projects were reviewed. Type 1 is approved by the Development Services Director with input from the team. There is no appeal and no public noticing. Type 2 is approved by the Development Services Director. There's the possibility of an appeal to the Hearing Examiner who then makes the final decision. Type 3 goes to the Hearing Examiner

for a decision based on a recommendation from the Development Services Director. If the decision is appealed, it goes straight to court.

There was a discussion on an expedited process as it relates to the Development Services team. The Development Services team went through a LEAN streamlining process in the past that shortened the permit review process by a few weeks. There are three key team members who participate in reviews: the planner, building reviewer, and engineer. Cities with special expedited processes have larger teams, sometimes even separate departments for the three roles mentioned. Additionally, there are other agencies that participate in aspects of the review, such as the Fire District and Northshore Utility District. The City does not control the deadlines or turn around times of these outside agencies. Additional staff would need to be hired, or contractors and consultants utilized, in order to expedite the process any more than it already is. In both cases, the process would only be slightly expedited, and the developer would have to pay for expedition.

The Commissioners reviewed six scenarios shared by City Staff.

Scenario 1: Moving affordable housing project permit applications to the head of the line for review, rather than being added into the queue. A potential con to this approach is that this could prioritize affordable housing over other community related projects such as schools, parks, and new City facilities (fire station, etc). The Commissioners expressed concerns with prioritizing affordable housing over all other projects. A version of prioritization could consist of meeting criteria such as the level of affordability and number of affordable housing units being provided.

There was a question of exploring a special review process for exceptional benefit projects. The City currently has a process for exceptional benefit projects that goes to City Council. This is a Development Agreement and it currently does not extend to projects in residential zones. This was a point of interest for the Commissioners. City Staff will provide the Development Agreement chapter for the next meeting.

Scenario 2: Reducing review times specified in the Zoning Code. Staffing could be an issue with this if many projects came in at the same time. There are state mandated timeframes, and the Development Agreement could be a way around some of these timeframes; however, it was created more to deal with amendments to standards rather than to move to a quicker process.

Scenario 3: Reducing the level of process. This affects appeals and public noticing. It reduces the permit into a lesser type of permit review, automatically reducing the length of the process. While the Commissioners agreed that this could expedite the process, they felt that public noticing and allowing for public comments was an important part of the process, especially for development projects in residential areas. There was an idea for a new hybrid permit type, one where the appeal process is removed but the public noticing and comment period is kept.

Scenario 4: A developer can apply for expedited review. The developer could apply for expedited review based on their timeline; the City could determine if there was adequate staffing or if a contractor or consultant would be needed (which the developer would pay for). This scenario could be advantageous to projects with non-profit funding as it allows the development schedule to be more structured with a more specific timeline.

Scenario 5: Eliminating appeals. There is always an appeal opportunity to court, outside of the City; this scenario has to do with appeals within the City. Appeals can create delays. There would always be the option of appealing to court, which would help ensure that any appeal filed was one that had a strong case. Other options regarding appeals include raising the fee for filing an appeal. The appeal fee was reduced by a decision from City Council in recent years based on reviewing the cost to the City of appeals and low-income residents' ability to file an appeal. General feedback from the Commissioners was that raising the fee would ensure the appeals submitted were of a more serious nature, however for projects in residential neighborhoods a higher fee or elimination of City level appeals might make it too expensive or hard for residents. There was a discussion about creating restraints around the reasons for appeals. This is something that would need attorney review. Commissioners commented that removing the ability for citizens to comment and appeal a project would be a takeaway from that they currently can do. There is an interest in exploring this more with the City attorney to see if there are restraints that could be put in place to limit the reasons or basis for appeals related to affordable housing projects. One thought for a restraint is to limit appeals based on a threshold for how many people must support the appeal for it to be filed.

Scenario 6: A new, unique process for affordable housing projects that incorporates elements of scenarios 1 through 5. This would add a layer of complexity to the zoning code. City Staff felt they had enough feedback from scenarios 1 through 5 to draft a new process.

The Commissioners asked for additional information pertaining to the affordable housing incentives. City Staff will provide additional information on growth rates of affordable housing and maps of areas with zoning support for development of affordable housing.

City Staff proposed that the September 1, 2020 meeting be canceled. Commissioner Loutsis made a motion to cancel the September 1st meeting. Commissioner Vanderlinde seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ohrenschall adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.

Planning Commission

Approved by Planning Commission on: October 6, 2020 via virtual roll call vote