



CITY OF
TOPEKA

TOPEKA PLANNING COMMISSION

Monday, March 15, 2021

6:00PM – via video conference

CASE MINUTES

Members present: Brian Armstrong (Chair), Corey Dehn, Marc Fried, Del-Metrius Herron, Wiley Kannarr, Jim Kaup, Ariane Messina, Katrina Ringler, Matt Werner (9)

Members Absent: (0)

Staff Present: Bill Fiander, Planning & Development Director; Dan Warner, Planning Division Director; Mike Hall, Current Planning Manager; Kris Wagers, Administrative Officer; Mary Feighny, Legal

Public Hearing of CPA21/02 Downtown Master Plan by the City of Topeka requesting to amend the text and map of the City of Topeka's Comprehensive Plan creating the Downtown Topeka Master Plan. The area affected by the amendment is bounded by Topeka Boulevard to the west, Morse Street to the north, BNSF rail lines to the east, and 13th Street to the South.

Mr. Armstrong called the case. Mr. Fiander addressed the Commission, explaining that the normal progression of a plan such as this is a presentation one month and the public hearing the following month. The public hearing generally focuses more on implementation.

The current plan is following the above described progression. The cover memo provided in the agenda packet includes information about minor changes staff made to the plan after the presentation at the February Planning Commission meeting.

Mr. Fiander explained that public participation included a community survey which yielded approximately 178 responses. From that survey, the top 5 priorities were (tied for #1) Riverfront Access and Dining/Café/Food/Beverage; (3) Entertainment Venues; (4) Retail Storefronts; (5) Grocery Store.

Mr. Fiander spoke about "Big Ideas / Takeaways" and future zoning changes. He briefly discussed Downtown Roadway Projects and then spoke about zoning. He explained that while the plan does not make zoning changes, it would set policy for land use that, if adopted, would allow for future zoning changes. He then spoke about Design Standards that that plan updates, these based on input from design professionals, and stood for comments or questions.

Mr. Armstrong stated he appreciates the implementation plan and especially the portion about roadway projects, as well as the need evaluation for catalyst. He appreciates the hard work Mr. Fiander and Mr. Warner have put into the plan.

Mr. Fiander thanked Bryson Risley (Topeka Planning) for his work in putting the plan together as well as the 3-D mapping which he worked on along with Architect One. He also thanked Stantec, the consulting firm which worked with River South, and Tim Paris (Topeka Planning) who put together the historical information.

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Mr. Fried stated he appreciates the various sectors and how the plan brings them together rather than sets them in competition with one another.

Ms. Messina stated she agrees with Mr. Fried and is excited about the master plan. She had questions about plans for parking. Mr. Fiander confirmed for her that the parking information in the plan is broad. He stated that the City has completed a parking study and is currently working with downtown stakeholders to implement it. More granular details will come forth based on that parking study.

Mr. Armstrong declared the **public hearing open**.

Rhiannon Friedman introduced herself as President of Downtown Topeka, Inc. She stated she wishes to provide a statement of support for the plan, adding that it's clear much work, research and collaboration has gone into it. She stated that coming from a background of economic development, she sees it as crucial to have a plan such as this in place when it comes to securing outside development dollars and new opportunities.

Grant Glenn, a Topeka-based attorney, spoke stating he has been actively involved with the Downtown Rotary Club and Friends of the Free State Capital, both of which have a strong investment in the 400 block of Kansas Avenue. He stated they are excited about the catalyst opportunity and spoke to the importance of getting the post office building on the rolls of the national register.

Mike Bell spoke, focusing on concerns about the central Topeka grocery desert and the importance of getting a grocery store. He stated he has questions or concerns about proposed reductions in traffic lanes and wonders how that will work with potentially increased traffic flow as more people are attracted to downtown.

Mr. Armstrong asked staff if they would like to address Mr. Bell's question about traffic flow. Mr. Fiander stated that potential lane re-allocations have been reviewed from a traffic circulation standpoint, where it was found that many of the current streets are over-built. The plan advocates for a more balanced, multi-modal network that is strong and supports transit, pedestrian, bikes, and vehicles. He spoke about lane re-allocations that have already taken place and are working well within the city, and added that key arterials such as Topeka Blvd will not have motor vehicle lane reductions.

Regarding grocery stores, Mr. Fiander stated that a downtown grocery store could benefit a wide area.

Matt Masilionis spoke, encouraging staff to "think big" as Topeka is the capital city of Kansas. He believes a "governmental housing" section should be considered, and the plan should make a statement both for the state and nationally.

With nobody else logged in wishing to speak, Mr. Armstrong declared the **public hearing closed**.

Mr. Kaup congratulated Bill and his staff for their hard work. He stated he believes it is important to have an approved and adopted plan.

Motion by Ms. Ringler to recommend approval to the Governing Body to adopt the Downtown Master Plan as an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan; **Second** by Mr. Dehn. **APPROVAL** 9-0-0