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Steve Horton, Mayor
Scott Andrews, City Manager

City of Covington
MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION BOARD
March 8th, 2022 @ 6PM
Meeting Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair called the Tuesday, March 8th, 2022 City of Covington Planning Commission Board meeting to order at 6:15 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Chair conducted a roll call. The following persons were present:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jared Rutberg (Chair)
Shawn McGovern
Mike Lassiter
John Travis
John Maxwell
Tim Fleming
Bobbie Shephard (zoom)
Ruel Parker (zoom)

STAFF PRESENT

Tres Thomas, P&D Director
Marc Beechuk, P & Z Manager/Acting Chair
Renee Criswell, Planner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Lee Aldridge

III. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Chair confirms quorum.

IV. OPENING REMARKS

"This Planning Commission meeting is being recorded via Zoom for the official record. All Participants are encouraged to conduct themselves accordingly. Please keep your microphone muted unless you are called upon by the chair to speak. Planning staff reserves the right to mute participants and if repeated outbursts occur to remove a participant from the meeting. We appreciate your patience and actions in this unique time.", as well, "The Planning Commission makes recommendations only with final decisions being that of City Council."

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. No meeting held for February 8th, 2022 minutes.

VI. **OLD BUSINESS**

None

VII. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Rezoning: PR22-0001**

Request: Rezone parcel from current zoning of NR2 (Neighborhood Residential District- Section 2) to NM (Neighborhood Mixed-Use District).

Location: 5186 Hartsook Drive

Tax Map Parcel Number: **C009 0005 003A**

Applicant(s): JMB Development and Rentals, LLC

STAFF PRESENTATION

Staff presented to board that the applicant was seeking to rezone the subject parcel from its current zoning of NR2 (Neighborhood Residential District – Section 2) to NM (Neighborhood Mixed-Use) in order to construct an approximate 2160 square foot, one-story duplex office building. Staff confirmed the city’s permitted use ordinance 16.16.020, would allow for the applicant’s intended use. The proposed structure would sit adjacent to commercial property (Covington Church of God), neighboring physician offices (Georgia Heart Specialists), and less than 300 feet from Piedmont Newton Hospital and nestled amidst a thriving mixed-use neighborhood.

STAFF FINDINGS

Staff’s report found that the project site was divided off parcel # C009-0005-003 under a recorded final plat dated September of 2019. The site was vacant with remnants of what the final plat showed to have once been a swimming pool, later filled in. The parcel was at the corner of Hartsook and Newton, off one of Covington’s prominent two-lane collector streets with several means of access off Newton to U S Hwy 278, to include Cook and Adams to the East and Mill St. down West of property. The property was also a short distance East of the square in downtown Covington.

The proposed parking plan needed to meet requirements under ordinance 16.44.010 Off-street automobile parking spaces and staff would work with applicant to ensure those requirements are met, along with all other technical standards.

Site development may also require the installation of new stormwater infrastructure, which the city engineer would address during plan review.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff concluded that Covington's Future Land Use Map classified this property and all contiguous properties as office professional. The fundamental elements of comprehensive planning and urbanism was the balanced mix of neighborhoods, districts and corridors. With the abundant mix of single-family, multi-family and commercial associated with the subject property at Newton and Hartsook Drive, staff felt the proposed rezoning and use of a one-story duplex office building promoted a good relationship for live/work/play and **recommended approval with conditions below** by the Planning Commission at this time and continued work with applicant/developer to address technical standards and conditions, to include parking and storm water.

Condition:

1. Parking must meet requirements under ordinance 16.44.010 Off-street automobile parking spaces.
2. Address technical standards as required.

DISCUSSION

Applicant, Michael Bruno, stated staff presented pretty well.

Chair asked if he was aware of the parking items and needed to get with staff. Bruno reported he was already in talks with staff regarding.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair opened floor to public comment. None given. Floor closed.

MOTION

Ruel Parker recommended to approve with staff recommendations. Mike Lassiter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

B. **Rezoning: PR21-0005**

Request: Text Amendment for Clark's Grove Overlay

LOCATION: Clark St., Land Lots #252 & 253

Tax Map Parcel Number: **C035 0007 052**

Owner(s): Fowler Newton Properties, Inc.,

Applicant: Sarah Butler (PRAXIS3 Architecture)

STAFF PRESENTATION

Staff presented to board that the applicant was seeking to extend the Clark's Grove overlay across an adjacent tract totaling 21.01 acres. The Clark's Grove overlay currently expanded over the parcels directly east (south of Clark St) of this proposal in Phase I and the parcels north of that phase, across Clark St in Phase II. The development had a conceptual plan proposing 3 stacked flat style multi-family buildings, accommodating 145 units (w/clubhouse and amenity space) on the northernmost portion totaling 4.54 acres (31.94 units/ac). It proposes 81 rowhomes on the middle 5.46 acres with the potential for live/work space (14.84 units/acre). A park space south of that section totaling 4.62 acres. Lastly, a final future phase of

6.11 acres at the southernmost portion for single family units. The conceptual plan would break down the 3 areas into 3 separate transects as was done for the original phases of Clark's Grove. The transects lower in intensity from north to south, proposing the apartment area be T-5, rowhomes T-4 and single-family phase T-3. Architectural standards exist in Clark's Grove and this application is looking to extend those as well. Access for the project was from one entrance off Clark St, 2 off Turner Lake Rd for the rowhomes and a future one-off Turner Lake Rd for the single-family phase. Parking in the rowhome portion would be in rear-loaded garages as well as on-street parking similar to Phases I & II. Parking for the apartments was shown as an interior, surface lot.

STAFF FINDINGS

Staff continued to report that the 21-acre site was vacant and was a part of original discussions for Clark's Grove overlay; however, it was removed. Location was adjacent to our current, largest, programmed park in Covington on the west. It was bordered on the east by the Cricket Frog trail, providing just under a 1.25-mile connection to Pace St and Downtown. By car or sidewalk, this parcel was approximately 0.85 miles from the Downtown Square via Clark St. and also was bordered by Turner Lake Rd providing a short connection to Hwy 278, I-20 and commercial options.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff found that extending the overlay would fit into the location as a reasonable sized compliment to Phases I & II of Clark's Grove along with adjacency to Turner Lake Park and quick access to Town and the region. Staff felt that the proposal departed, somewhat, from the identity currently in Clark's Grove and merely extends the residential aims of that overlay and not as much of the community plan. Providing a range of housing and form is a quality addition to the existing stock, but that needed to be handled in a complimentary way. The larger standalone apartments were not in keeping with the town square area in Phase I or the multi-family structures in Phase II which both exist on smaller scales. It also adds a large surface parking lot and discards the street network which would be a departure from the form in Phase I or II.

Access to this site would be beneficial and also a point needing attention. It was bound by the major north/south access road on the west side of Covington. That provides easy connection to commercial as well as I-20, however, it was also heavily traversed and potentially in need of upgrading. Staff continued that the access via Cricket Frog trail would be another benefit and activating this site would serve to enhance that community amenity.

. The architectural standards in the Clark's Grove overlay would allow certain aspects that were below the standards of the design requirements for multi-family outside of Clark's Grove. That should be enhanced, newly defined or elevated as opposed to be reduced. Staff presented additional points of consideration to the board, as listed below:

Planning & Zoning comments

- The extension of the regulating plan should have a defined area and scope of the Urban Center (T-5). It should tie to the Urban Center on initial phases in a rational way or be defined in an obvious way or location.

- Percentages of the transects should reflect some consistency with initial phases or be justified. A non-scientific split looks like 33/50/17% (T-5, T-4, T-3 respectively) and approximately half that T-5 changed from attached to detached single family meaning there is even less.
- Architectural Standards are actually below what Covington requires for multi-family outside of the overlay. In addition, the existing commercial/multi-fam is mostly if not fully clad in brick. There should be some consistency to that design and a requirement for brick or masonry. Doors should be required to be wood or wood composite.
- Commercial/Institutional must be a component of this phase, Clark's Grove was set up to be mixed use and the proposal is simply a multi-fam project
- There was originally a planned, internal connection to the earlier phases when the tract in this proposal was considered to be included in the overlay. Re-establishing that would help the internal network and provide more opportunity for community use of any commercial component or use by new residents of the earlier phase amenities.
- Proposal should show a connection to the south. Opening of Old Brown Bridge Road would give a safer exit from the site through a signalized intersection and potentially provide another commercial opportunity.

Engineering comments from city staff

- Because Keck & Wood will be recommending that Turner Lake Road be widened to four lanes, we need to have 52' of ROW from the centerline. This will require several feet of dedication from the developer.
- Due to the close proximity to roundabout, the driveway on Clarks Street needs to be: 1) right-in & right-out or 2) right-in / left-in & right out only.
- Access off of Turner Lake Road needs to be further studied as it is a major through road for commuters on the west side of Covington. Providing road networks is in keeping with earlier phases of Clark's Grove, however, it needs to be safely connected to Turner Lake Rd as that is a more heavily traveled road than any former perimeter road on Phases I & II.
- For Phase 2, the entrance should line up with the Turner Lake Road / Brown Bridge Road Intersection.
- Plan still shows two access points off of Turner Lake Road; therefore, need to provide the following options:
 - Two points of ingress/egress off Turner Lake Road with RIRO only; or
 - One point of ingress/egress with full access and median break.

Staff found the extension to be a reasonable request, this parcel being ideally located for a mixed-use community. Extending the concept of one of our most highly sought neighborhoods could continue to activate this area of the city. Staff recommends **Deferral for additional information** of the overlay text amendment.

DISCUSSION

Applicant, Doug Tuller, presented to board. Project requested for text amendment to Clark's Grove final phase. He stated that CG that his father, Charlie Tuller, was the beginning of CG and he has been studying and familiar of this neighborhood for quite some time, generations. They wanted to add and enhance community.

Charlie Tuller then approached board and read off a submitted letter that has been recorded into file and available via open records request. Bullet points regarding letter include the desire to build quality homes, contribute positively to Covington's urban development. The additional

phase would be continuation of its original intent of a mixture of traditional and single-family, multi-family and condos as well as commercial. Mr. Tuller remarked that we, Newton County and citizens of Covington, must continue to stress connectivity and parks.

Sarah Butler then approached and reiterated the main approach discussed, but plan was made to show respect of original phase in that the density was scaled with more multi-family units up towards arterial roads, new phase being that of two and three-story townhomes with live work unit being in the middle right where it would connect with trail to where the live work unit is in first phase. She stated to the left would be future single-family phase. Intent was to incorporate mix of housing types with interesting street scapes, as well as having the community building be centered to encourage a walk/live in different housing types.

Chair turned to board discussion. Travis inquired about a recommended 4-lane where? Tres Thomas, city engineer, responded the recommendation would be a left-hand turn lane at Brown Bridge, 4 lanes approaching round a bout in both directions Turner Lake, which would probably have to have round-a-bout increased in size; however, Thomas stated this plan was at concept phase and really had no concrete answers at this time. Will need internal discussions and the to M&C.

Travis any major push back from developer. Butler stated no exception for the Brown Bridge layout, for the retail, the live work connectivity assists with not having to have traffic.

Lassiter inquired about traffic concerns and would GA Dot be involved with not a state hwy. Thomas confirmed.

McGovern commented that the original phase seemed more organic, new phase seemed to take away from that organic feel. Less inviting air to the new development and should be addressed. Vinson commented the goal site is to incorporate varying types, but there is a narrowing area difficult to work with and why the connectivity was an important factor. Butler stated would be topography well laid out within.

Shephard inquired on the land available to make the needed road changes for 4-lane. Butler replied they were giving a portion of their property for right-of-way. Beechuk used the site plan on presentation to further show areas and lane installation to Shephard.

Chair inquired about the three curb cuts. Brown Bridge was at capacity and three curb cuts within less than a ¼ mile seemed to present a problematic traffic pattern.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair opened floor to public comment. None given. Floor closed to comments.

MOTION

Shawn McGovern motioned to recommended deferral to further investigate development issues and concerns (i.e., traffic, design). Mike Lassiter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

C. **Board/Staff Discussion:**

I. SINGLE-FAMILY DESIGN STANDARDS:

Staff presented to board that due to Covington's continued and proposed growth, along with board concerns for quality built, single-family housing, staff researched and initiated a new ordinance language to establish a clear and comprehensive residential development design guideline. Staff compared and incorporated similar design standards and language from neighboring city's experiencing the same growth.

STAFF PRESENTATION

Staff presented that in order to establish, promote and maintain building designs reflecting the scale of the existing, surrounding neighborhoods and to keep with the character of the city, implementation of the proposed text amendment for single-family residential design requirements was an important step in order to maintain those requirements and in setting a higher design standard for the future growth of Covington.

Items proposed:

- Architectural detail & variety
- material
- Roof pitch
- Garages
- Alley access
- Tree landscape & greenspace

STAFF FINDINGS

Refer above

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended approval of adoption of the single-family design standards.

DISCUSSION

McGovern commented 4' water table elevation would be difficult for historic district. Staff commented those would be excluded from historic or reviewed on a case by case. McGovern also commented that we do need standards in place, but need a range of home prices available, i.e., front projecting garages would add more sf to the home owner and cost. Need to still provide a limited amount or said percentage can have a 10' projection on front facing garages. Staff reported would probably put that percentage higher, but will further discuss to incorporate. McGovern also commented shutters should be at least wood composite or fiberglass.

Parker suggested standards should apply to all new construction, not just platted neighborhoods.

Chair inquired about masonry. Staff reported the currently 80/20 split on masonry was cut down to 40% to have brick, modular brick, natural stone or stone products. Taking the front façade, you get credit for window space to cut down on siding and receive credit and have brick

work make up the balance, with remaining three sides to have water table. McGovern stated need to place that verbiage exactly to eliminate confusion along with a freeze band/articulated top band, just to break up façade.

Lassiter stated that he agreed with applying to all new construction.

PUBLIC COMMENT

N/A

MOTION

John Travis motioned to recommend approval of the single-family design standards text amendment with conditions below:

- Applies to all new construction
- Shutters to have vertical alignment with window and either be of wood, composite, fiberglass material with no vinyl/pvc.
- Water table be on side and rear with at least a 24" articulated top band.
- Garages are permitted up to 25% of a platted neighborhood and can have up to 10' in front of house.

Mike Lassiter seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. GA. REGIONAL CODE CLEAN-UP

STAFF PRESENTATION

Staff reported to board that with going line by line last month with code cleanup draft, staff made changes as board recommended and staff was seeking a group of text amendments, including but not exclusive to the following:

- Zoning Use Chart – Simplify
- Future Land Use Map categories
- Road Classifications
- Amend Supplemental Use Regulations to match Use Chart
- Streetscape Dimensions
- Extend Driveways

STAFF FINDINGS

Staff's report found that the city had highly travelled corridors with varying zoning, which makes for a varied development pattern and hinders renovation, also having infrastructure concerns in areas with Corridor Mixed Use (CM) zoning. The classification allowed the highest amount of density for multi-family developments. Staff utilized the work of GA conservancy to better align corridors and balance the number of parcels that allow the most intense development.

Staff reported that Density bonuses were considered to allow the most on our high travelled, high-capacity corridors; a lesser extent on our medium capacity corridors; and the lowest bonus adjacent to our growing trail network. These proposals used the past bonus system which relied on proximity to commercial centers and preserved open space, then took infrastructure and traffic into consideration for a more granular approach.

Staff felt the size of growth was important to the discussion and was seeking to better incentivize smaller projects.

Staff added other items for consideration below:

- More or less corridors?
- Putting an overlay around the parks or better development thereof.
- Further alignment of neighborhoods off the corridors (particularly around the hospital, intersection of Jackson Hwy and Hwy 36, Covington Town Center & Areas on the northside where residential abuts industrial)
- Annexations
- Make bonus areas nodal dependent instead of corridor dependent?
- Require/allow other aspects to affect the bonus densities?

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended approval of continued work with the Ga. Regional Commission.

DISCUSSION

Chair discussed draft review for those sections highlighted below:

- 16.04.060 – Major local streets – 25-35 mph (Legion Drive & Old Monticello). Minor local ≤ 25 mph. Most side streets are listed at 25 mph.
- 16.20.010.1.B – should be 800 *square feet*
- 16.28.025.F – Max gross base density, making sure numbers were correct. With bonus up to 15 per acre?
- 16.16.020 Permitted Use table – yard sales if struck through?

MOTION

Mike Lassiter motioned to recommend approval of continued work with Ga. Regional Commission regarding code clean-up. John Travis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3. GA. CONSERVANCY – RE-ZONING

STAFF PRESENTATION

P&D Director relayed to board that Mayor & Council approved document November of 2020 with building typology coming out of that document. As a part of moratorium from Mayor & Council, we have been initiated to look at rezones/downzone suggestions from the Ga. Conservancy. Staff reported they were to look at making the allowable intensity of corridors match the capacity transportation routes and infrastructure, identify nodes for increased development and align blocks with common zoning to create consistency and opportunities for redevelopment.

STAFF FINDINGS

Staff found that if we put density in the right areas and contain growth to the areas in the city that can handle, it would allow for preservation of other areas. Growth would come and we need to prepare for that growth and that need to lead to utilizing density bonuses to manage some amenities and incentivize others.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended for area parcels along major corridors. All recommendations are to become Neighborhood Mixed Use (NM) zoning with some corridors including a few up zones in order to align block and provide renovation opportunities (NR-2 to NM).

STAFF FINDINGS

Staff proposed downzone areas with three levels of bonuses, based on corridor types and ability to sustain growth highlights. Corridor areas discussed below:

- Thoroughfare
 - Hwy 278 from Capes to Hwy 142 between Hwy 278/Covington by-pass/MLK'
 - Hwy 142 from Hwy 278 to I-20;
 - Pace St from Hwy 278 to Cricket Frog Trail

Staff recommended:

- Max bonus density of 36 units/acre for projects under 5 acres
 - Max bonus density of 24 unit/acre for projects over 5 acres
 - To qualify for bonus densities, project must contain the following:
 - Commercial
 - Amenity space
 - Additional amenities, one of the following:
 - Public plaza
 - Public art
 - On-site daycare
 - EV charging stations
 - Green roof
 - Solar panels
 - Additional 3 units /acre for one of the following:
 - Inclusionary zoning
 - Green building program
- Neighborhood
 - Washington St. from Midway Dr., to Emory St.,
 - Newton Dr., from Anderson Ave., to Adams St.

Staff recommended:

- Max bonus density of 24 units/acre for projects under 3 acres
- Max bonus density of 18 units/acre for projects over 3 acres
- To qualify for bonus densities, project must contain the following:
 - Commercial
 - Amenity Space
 - Additional amenities for one of the following:
 - Shared use space
 - Public art
 - EV charging stations
 - Green roof
 - Solar panels
 - Additional 3 units/acre for one of the following:
 - Inclusionary zoning
 - Green building program

- Green
 - Cricket Frog Trail
 - Eastside Trail

Staff recommended:

- Max bonus density of 18 units/acre for projects under 3 acres
- To qualify for bonus densities, the project must contain the following:
 - Amenity space
 - Trail connection
 - Additional amenities to contain one of the following:
 - Shared use space
 - Public art
 - EV charging stations
 - Green roof
 - Solar panels

DISCUSSION

Staff and board went over all corridors and parcels pertaining with staff further explaining areas and staff's recommended corridor requirements.

Lassiter requested discussed revisions be submitted via email to ensure the board members could thoroughly read over once again, given the amount of information.

Shephard commented that not many developers include inclusionary zoning and she stressed to leave that within the additional bonuses.

After lengthy discussions, the board adjusted staff's recommendations as listed below:

- Thoroughfare
 - Hwy 278 from Capes to Hwy 142 between Hwy 278/Covington by-pass/MLK'
 - Hwy 142 from Hwy 278 to I-20;
 - Pace St from Hwy 278 to Cricket Frog Trail

Board recommended revisions:

- Max bonus density of 36 units/acre for projects under 5 acres
- ~~Max bonus density of 24 unit/acre for projects over 5 acres~~
- To qualify for bonus densities, project must contain the following:
 - Commercial
 - Amenity space
 - Additional amenities, one of the following:
 - Public plaza
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- Additional 3 units /acre for one of the following:
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- Neighborhood
 - Washington St. from Midway Dr., to Emory St.,
 - ~~Newton Dr., from Anderson Ave., to Adams St.~~
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- Max bonus density of 24 units/acre for projects under 3 acres
 - ~~Max bonus density of 18 units/acre for projects over 3 acres~~
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 - Amenity Space
 - Additional amenities for one of the following:
 - Shared use space
 - Public art
 - EV charging stations
 - Green roof
 - Solar panels
 - Additional 3 units/acre for one of the following:
 - Inclusionary zoning
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- Green
 - Cricket Frog Trail
 - Eastside Trail
- Board recommended revisions:
- Max bonus density of 18 units/acre for projects under 3 acres
 - To qualify for bonus densities, the project must contain the following:
 - Amenity space
 - Trail connection
 - Additional amenities to contain one of the following:
 - Shared use space
 - Public art
 - EV charging stations
 - Green roof
 - Solar panels

MOTION

Shawn McGovern motioned to recommend approval of staff recommended text amendments with revisions listed below:

- Limit bonuses to projects containing 3 acres or less;
- Remove proposed Neighborhood Corridor area Newton Dr., from Anderson Ave., to Adams St.

John Travis seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/DISCUSSIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

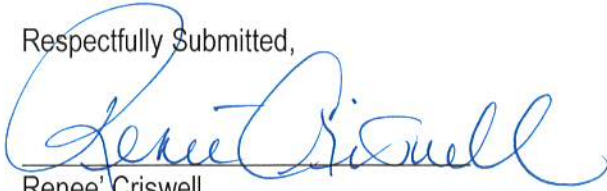
IX. CITIZENS PRESENT

Doug Tuller – 2141 Emory St. (business)
Robert R. Fowler III – 2141 Emory St. (business)
Sarah Butler -100 P'tree St., NW Ste 1450 Atl 30303

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Shawn McGovern motioned to adjourn. John Travis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Renee Criswell
Planning & Development

Jared Rutberg, Presiding Chair
Planning Commission Board

