

ALTOONA PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
December 18, 2018
Altoona City Hall

Members Present: Michelle Sloan, Scott Henry, Jill Pudenz, Eric Gjersvik, Ann Moyna

Members Absent: Dan Narber, Dan Dove

Staff: Chad Quick, Jenn Naylor, John Shaw

Guests: Larry and Raquel Chappell, Barry Accountius, Brent Jackman, Jack Bartels, Lemar Koethe, John Miller, Steve Moyna, Brad Stanbrough, Jared Murray, Shannon Hof, Anessa Mann, Amber Buse-Brown, others not signing in

Chairwoman Jill Pudenz called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call was taken with five members present.

1. Continue public hearing, consideration and recommendation of a comprehensive plan land use map amendment request from Landmark Development Services and Element 119 for 8.31 acres of land from Low Density Residential to Medium Density Residential for Meadow Vista South Plat 3.

Jared Murray (Civil Design Advantage) presented the request. The reason for the request is the existing 65-foot lots to the west have stalled out. Per staff comments, eight of 38 lots have been or are being developed. The plat was platted in October of 2016. The owner and developer got together to come up with a new concept, including smaller, single-family lots and low-density multi-family, which is what the marking is asking for. To transition, they have gone from 65-foot lots in the west Plat 2 development to 50-foot, smaller single-family lots. On the other side of the public street, there are some four-plex, townhome two-story units with only front doors shown on the public side. All driveways and garages are on the east, hidden from the public. On the other side of the public street are three-plex ranch walkout units, which take advantage of the existing grade that falls down to the creek toward the proposed trail. Murray demonstrated on the projector how on the south side they are keeping the 65-foot minimum lot width labeled Area A to provide a buffer between what is already platted and what they are proposing. There is also open space where the trail crosses through to keep an additional buffer between the single family and the townhomes. There are 22 of the smaller 50-foot lots which transition into four-plexes townhomes and three-plexes. Renderings of layout variations were shown. Murray addressed staff comments regarding the density and roadway congestion. He showed aerials and explained that this development would not oversaturate the roadway networks. Another staff comment related to the space between the decks and the trail. To help with this, they shifted everything west. The tightest separation is a 17-foot space between decks and the trail in one section of the development. They feel they have alleviated some of staff's concerns with that shift. They believe they are maintaining the buffer with the existing trees, so they hope they are reducing any effect on neighboring properties across the railroad tracks by removing trees and maintaining buffer.

Pudenz asked if he had a rendering of what was approved back in 2016. Murray compared the two on the projector. Henry asked if he was going to address agenda item two. Murray stated he addressed both. Henry asked for clarification on the density and lot changes. Quick stated that they are displacing 35 single family homes and replacing them with 24 single-family homes, 40 four-plexes, and 18 tri-plexes units. Gjersvik asked why they feel the development stalled out, as lots facing a river and trees seem desirable. Murray wasn't sure and stated that the market wasn't demanding that size of lot. Shaw explained to the Commission members that the portion being shown, such as the

walkout lots on the east side of the creek, isn't developed yet. Gjersvik asked if there were something controlling the location of the trail. Shaw explained that at the edge of the field is a fence line and trees. All along it the elevation drops off toward the creek bottom. Murray stated the trail is shown there to follow the fence line that Staff wanted. Originally, a trail was shown mostly inside on the east side of the fence line. Staff requested they stake it. Staff looked at it and concluded that it would require bulldozing everything down, which isn't desirable. The trail needs to be on the west side of the fence line. This trail will tie in further to the south where Rutherford will cross over the railroad tracks and connect to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail and also connect to Eagle Ridge. It serves all of the Meadow Vista area. It's a major connection. Pudenz asked if they had data on why they think triplexes and quad-plexes will do better than single-family units.

Brad Stanbrough (Element 119) explained he has been a homebuilder for 21 years and understands the market. He stated there is currently an affordable housing crisis. Everything gets more expensive. Builders keep overbuilding. Rates go up. He stated that per the MLS for Altoona, where "affordable" used to mean under \$300,000 and now means under \$200,000 for the seller's market, with rates going up and good times last year, there is massive saturation. Existing lots have stalled out because the price and size of the lots and the covenant restrictions. He has been contacted about these plats the last few years. He is trying to deliver a quality product for which that there is a need in order to fix the problem. He understands that means changes from what was previously planned, which may or may not work for Altoona. He feels this type of product is needed in Altoona. He is trying to buffer the neighbors to keep the peace but also fix the problem. Stanbrough explained that the \$300,000 market in West Des Moines is dead. Multi-family for sale has been underdeveloped in the last five years. It's been a safer investment to build and rent them. He repeated that he is trying to fix a problem, and it is price driven. The two-story units would run \$210,000 to \$230,000, and the age range of buyer would be younger to moderate. The ranch-style would run from \$250,000 to the low \$300,000s, depending on options, and the buyers would be those who could afford them or retirees. They would be typically one-to-two bedrooms. Pudenz asked about the price of existing homes that haven't been able to sell. Stanbrough stated they are in the \$300,000s. He explained that they had developed Bennett Bay, and those sold in the \$265,000 range, which were the most steady sales they have had outside of multi-family projects, because the need is there. Pudenz agreed there is a need for affordable homes and smaller lots. Stanbrough stated that he wasn't there to make the neighbors mad or ask for something he shouldn't ask for; he was trying to see the reality and the need. He stated there is a lot of land they would have to purchase that is essentially greenspace, trees, and park, and all of that comes into play with cost feasibility. They have hired BSB, a national company and one of the most expensive architects in Iowa. The planned units are not going to be all-vinyl, garbage, throw-away units. They will be inviting while still hitting the price point with quality. They would be happy to be held to architectural standards and turn in colors for approval. Gjersvik acknowledged that this wasn't a final site plan and asked Staff if they were comfortable with the private street, parking, driveway distances from the street, getting cars off the street, and the like. Shaw stated they had turned in a revised drawing that show distances from the back of the deck to the trail. They shifted things around. With the depths of the driveways, Staff would like to try to have a minimum of 22 feet, so cars can park without encroaching the sidewalk. They are showing 20 feet on the plans, so those are going to have to be moved. The top three northern tri-plex units are very close to the trail, which is a concern. For people to use the trail, it has to feel inviting rather than feel like trespassing. Redesigning may be necessary, as this issue is of great concern. Gjersvik asked if there were flood plain issues out there. Murray stated it was shown on the exhibit. Shaw added that the creek on eastern side has good banks. The area where they are showing the three-plexes is flat and may be wetter, so it is something to look at. Gjersvik stated that it would be nice if they could elevate the trail to get it out of the wet area. Pudenz asked who maintains the private street. Murray stated the HOA.

With no further questions from Commission members, Pudenz opened the hearing to public comments.

Raquel Chappell, 4120 NE Casebeer Dr, lives next to the proposed zoning change. She read a prepared statement, of which she gave a copy to Staff. She stated she was concerned that it will change the character of the Casebeer community. She wanted clarification if PUD was planned urban development or planned unit development. She asked if there will be an HOA; if it would be a 55+ community; how many stories the townhomes would be; if they would become rentals if they don't sell; if investors could buy multiple units for rental income; if they would be owner-occupied; if it would be low rent housing, making south Altoona a continuation of the east side or south sides of Des Moines or the wrong side of the tracks. Chappell read statistics from a 2010 study of low income housing tax credit development in Polk County regarding low income housing tax credit developments being associated with a 2-4% slowing of property value appreciation among nearby single-family homes. She stated that multi-unit homes have more City services and police calls and will lower property values and raise taxes to cover the cost of the calls and services. Other concerns included disruptive noises and light pollution and inability to enjoy a beautiful sunset. She felt Area C could be larger lots with larger homes and larger tax value or a larger City park. It has always been tranquil with trees and streams. She feels this is a bad idea and asked the Commission to keep Altoona a town with a little class and dignity. Chappell had discussions with six of her Casebeer Dr neighbors and verbally gave the Commission summaries of their comments, which were as follows: Douglas Witzenburg, told her absolutely no and to quit trying to ruin the serenity of their properties. Carol Mann told her absolutely no, that it would ruin their peace and tranquility, which is partially why they bought that property. Mann is totally against it. Amber Brown told her it's a bad idea and asked if they will be rental units in the future, adding that it's a historical street. Brian Streeter told her he is worried about noise and light pollution. Sonya Starry told her that it would disrupt the peace and quiet, and there would be too much light and noise. Someone she referred to only as Steve said that he is against it, because it is not cohesive with the properties already in the area.

Pudenz addressed Chappell's questions, stating that the PUD was a planned unit development. She stated that the intention of the seller was to sell all of the units. Stanbrough affirmed that they have no desire whatsoever to rent them if they don't sell. Pudenz stated that rentals can happen in any neighborhood. The volume of police calls is up in the air, but with more density, it is possible. Any development, including the original single-family one, would change their backyards in regards to light and noise pollution. Chappell stated that it would change but not threefold. Shaw reiterated the change from 35 units to 84 units. Chappell stated that each unit has two porch lights.

Shannon Hof, 4240 NE Casebeer Dr, lives east of the proposed development. She asked about the reason for changing the zoning from 100% single-family homes to 70% multi-family homes. She believes the answer she is hearing is they are looking to sell properties that are not currently moving. She heard Stanbrough say that there was a need for affordable housing in Altoona, meaning homes under \$200,000. She pointed out that the units he is proposing start at \$210,000 and go up to the low \$300,000s. She doesn't hear how this development meets the need for affordable housing. She wanted to know if more trees, greenspace, or buffer area can be required between the new properties and the train tracks and trail. She felt the heavily wooded area was very attractive to pedestrians. Decks only 17 feet from the trail subtracts from the appeal of the trail. She asked if the park area was sufficient. She asked how many original units were planned versus the new proposal. If it is 35 to 84, she said that is a huge change. Hof asked what the realistic market demand is for selling this many houses adjacent to active train tracks. She raised children two acres from the tracks, but if new homes are

constructed 17 feet from them, she wanted to know what safety measures will be put into place. She was also concerned if the existing streets could support the increased traffic. She reiterated her points and stated there is opposition from long-time homeowners.

Gjersvik addressed Hof's concerns regarding distance from the tracks, explaining the 100-foot right-of-way railroad easements that are probably in place. Without having them marked on the developer's plans, he was working from memory and stated that there are probably 50 feet between the tracks to the property line and another 30 to 50 feet to the trail. Pudenz asked there was a berm. Gjersvik stated that there is an elevation dropoff at the creek. There are trees between the tracks and the property. The 17 feet is from the proposed trail, which isn't there now. The existing trail is on the east/north side of the tracks.

Anessa Mann, 4170 NE Casebeer Dr, has lived there for 12 years. She stated she is completely against the idea and that having a barrier would be nice. She wanted to know how far between her property line and the new proposed area. Pudenz reiterated that it looks to be at least 100 feet. Gjersvik reiterated the information about the railroad right-of-ways. She also wanted to know what she will be seeing when she looks out her backyard. Shaw stated she would see the back sides of the ranch-style tri-plex units, not the garages. She would see decks off the back. It was walkout-style.

With no further public comments, Pudenz closed the public hearing. Henry asked if they had moved the tri-plexes in far enough for the trail to go in. Shaw stated that it appeared that they tried to squeeze some more space by reducing the driveways. They need to go back to 22-foot long driveways. The trail ends up being in the backyard of these units and is very intrusive. There needs to be more space. Three of the tri-plexes are too close to the trail. Berming and heavier plantings are an option for the other units to help create a barrier. Pudenz asked if the option of keeping all single-family homes with smaller lot lines was looked at, similar to the original design. Stanbrough stated that they looked at it. Based on the size and the cost, it was not financially feasible. There are a little over 20 acres. With the cost of the land and infrastructure, this is as loose as they can make it. The distance to the bike trail is more of an annoyance to the unit owner. They have had this situation in several different instances, and the buyer is aware when they purchase the unit if that is something they can tolerate or not. Typically the demographic in that unit is not someone who spends time in their backyard at all. Stanbrough addressed the driveways, stating that in eight different communities in which they have built, none have issues with 20-foot driveways. He personally used to have an F-250 4-door longbed truck and could easily park it in a 20-foot driveway. He would like to say these would be the nicest multi-family units built on this side of town. The Commission could check out his website to see examples. Henry asked how long they and Staff had gone back and forth regarding the development. Stanbrough stated around three months. He has spent a considerable amount of money to get to this point. There has been substantial planning to provide the color rendering and architectural. They are trying to be transparent. Henry asked if they could build detached single-family townhomes. Stanbrough stated no, that the risk is too big. It all comes down to price point. Pudenz asked if the neighbors in Meadow Vista were notified. Quick affirmed. Gjersvik asked if they were stuck with the trail location. Shaw stated that they staked out their original location east of the fence line, down in the ditch where it doesn't work. All of the existing trees would have to be bulldozed out, and they would have to bench the creek to put in the bike trail, which leaves no buffer between them and the neighbors and leaves no aesthetic to the trail system. There also needs to be at least 15 feet on both sides of the trail, providing enough distance to mow around and maintain the trail properly, as well as provide drainage for it. Pudenz stated in that case, it goes right up to the house.

Shaw reminded the Commission that Item 1 was the comprehensive plan change from low to medium density residential. Item 2 is the development plan, which is already zoned R-5, which would be amending the PUD plan, allowing the new setback and bulk regulations. What they see is what they would have to build with the PUD amendment. Pudenz asked if it would come back for site plan approval. Shaw affirmed, as well as preliminary and final plat approval. Henry stated that he's not against changing from Low to Medium Density Residential. He felt that they had gone a little overboard on the numbers in the development. He would like to see them get more toward what Bennett Bay looks like or something in regards to a single-family detached townhome. Pudenz agreed. Pudenz asked where the cutoff is between the Low and Medium Density Residential. Shaw stated they could ask if the applicant would be amenable to a design change and see what that looks like before going forward with either approval. Henry asked if Stanbrough would be willing to go back to the table. Stanbrough stated that one way or the other, this isn't the end of the world. They are trying to solve a problem. The financial feasibility of single-family on this property is at a loss. It is \$40,000 per acre. Although beautiful, there is a large amount of land they can't use. Henry reminded him that no matter what is decided tonight, they can go directly to City Council. Stanbrough stated that if they vote no, he won't leave upset. It is what it is. A quick no is better than a \$20,000, 90-day no. Henry asked Stanbrough if he were involved in this layout. Stanbrough affirmed and added that they were led to believe that everyone was open to this, as it had gone through a year prior. He understands it might not be in some of the neighbors' interests. Gjersvik stated he is not as opposed to the density change as others, but he wanted to know if anything could be done about the cul-de-sac to help shove it south to give more buffer between the railroad and proposed trail and units. Stanbrough stated he didn't know the depths of the single-family lots. Stanbrough stated they had looked at different units and layouts. This keeps the normal feel. If it doesn't work, then it doesn't work. He said they were open to adjusting things, but he couldn't foresee another product working in there. They could make it denser, but no one wants to see that. Gjersvik asked if there were park areas. Stanbrough stated that the whole corridor and top half are beautiful but expensive. For the trail to go in, someone has to develop it. The City will force them pay for it. He stated they could put a bunch of \$400,000 houses in there, which is what everyone wants and what was previously shown. But the market for those in West Des Moines, which is one of the most highly desirable places to live, has slowed. There are 85 ranch homes currently between \$400,000 and \$500,000, a two-year supply, due to saturation. Single family could be the next wave, and if that's what's best for the City, then so be it. Pudenz asked if he had looked at zero-lot line options. Stanbrough says it's about the same, just conjoined. Gjersvik stated that they are only looking at the density in this agenda item. Sloan asked again about the difference between Low and Medium Density. Shaw answered that Low is four units per acre and Medium is between four and twelve. Stanbrough stated that they have 20 acres and are proposing 80 units, which is just a hair over 4 units per acre.

Gjersvik moved to approve the recommendation of a comprehensive plan land use map amendment request from Landmark Development Services and Element 119 for 8.31 acres of land from Low Density Residential to Medium Density Residential for Meadow Vista South Plat 3. Seconded by Moyna.

Votes: Yes— Gjersvik, Moyna, Sloan, Henry, Pudenz. No—None. Motion approved, 5-0.

Pudenz explained to the audience that this was just a density change, that no layout had been approved. Item 2 is more about the actual layout, but they will still have to get final approval of a site plan layout. Shaw clarified that approving Item 2 is approving the basic concept.

2. Continue public hearing, consideration and recommendation of a development plan amendment request from Landmark Development Services and Element 119 for Meadow Vista South Plat 3 to change density from 35 single-family homes to 24 single-family homes, 18 tri-plex units, and 40 four-plex units, and to reduce the open space on 20.29 acres.

Jared Murray (Civil Design Advantage) had nothing further to add.

With no further questions from Commission members, Pudenz opened the hearing to public comments.

Amber Buse-Brown, 4091 NE Casebeer Dr, lives on six acres. Normally when she would see something like this, she would purchase a couple as rentals, as she owns another rental property in Altoona that she is currently selling. Casebeer is very different, however. She asked that the Commission think about how close they want to build to a nature reserve. She sees wildlife in her backyard. Think of the children that might encounter wildlife that live along the street. She added that all she is hearing from the developer is how much money they are going to lose. Maybe they could show that they are going to lose money if it is single family homes.

Shannon Hof, 4240 NE Casebeer Dr, asked if, in the interest of creative problem solving, since Casebeer is an incredible street to live on with acreages from which people do not move, they could consider developing it similar to Casebeer. Build fine quality houses on bigger lots. Stanbrough said unfortunately it is not financially feasible, but he'd be happy to sign a purchase agreement over to her and have her do that.

Raquel Chappell, 4120 NE Casebeer Dr, stated that if it were marketed correctly, they could get the dollars out of the area.

With no further public comments, Pudenz closed the public hearing.

Pudenz moved to deny the recommendation of a development plan amendment request from Landmark Development Services and Element 119 for Meadow Vista South Plat 3 to change density from 35 single-family homes to 24 single-family homes, 18 tri-plex units, and 40 four-plex units, and to reduce the open space on 20.29 acres, stating she would like to see something with a little less density, bringing the 35 down to the 50 to 60 range, preferably with single-family units on smaller lots or bi-attached or zero-lot line. Seconded by Sloan.

Votes: Yes—Pudenz, Sloan. No—Henry, Gjersvik, Moyna. Motion failed, 2-3.

Moyna corrected Pudenz's motion in that Pudenz said 35 rather than 82 down to 60.

Pudenz solicited for a different motion. Pudenz moved to table the item. Seconded by Moyna.

Votes: Yes—Pudenz, Moyna, Sloan, Henry, Gjersvik. No—None. Motion approved, 5-0.

Shaw asked the Commission to give the applicant and Staff some directive as to what they would like to see. The applicant cannot go directly to City Council now that the item has been tabled. The Commission needs to take action. Pudenz stated she would like to see the density decreased from 82 to between 50 and 60. Henry would like the tri-plexes to be reconfigured to help with the trail and a buffer between Casebeer and those units. That may mean shrinking the lots out front to more of a Bennett Bay-style. Gjersvik recommended showing more detail on the drawings, including easements and distances to lot lines, railroad, and other properties.

3. Continue public hearing, consideration and recommendation of a comprehensive plan land use map amendment request from Lemar Koethe and Woda Cooper Development for 4.64 acres of land from Commercial / Industrial Mixed Use to High Density Residential for a proposed project called Adam's Crossing.

Lemar Koethe, 3514 142nd St, Urbandale, presented the request as the landowner. He is requesting to downzone the property from Commercial/Industrial Mixed Use to High Density Residential to make it more pleasing to the neighborhood. There are almost 12 acres between this development and Target.

With no further questions from Commission members, Pudenz opened the hearing to public comments.

John Miller, 1526 34th Ave SW, is the neighbor south of this development. He stated that he knows he can't stand in the way of progress. He has concerns if this is changed and he wants to sell his property, he wanted to know if he could sell it as commercial if the land above him is changed to High Density Residential. Shaw stated it is still zoned as A-1 and would have to go through a rezoning process. In the larger sense, between Hwy 65 and 34th, the City sees this as a Mixed Use area, including High Density Residential and Commercial. As the east side has changed, they see it developing from Commercial/Industrial to a continuation of Mixed Use. It has visibility to Hwy 65 for commercial uses, possibly medical or commercial offices. It's close to services to the north and is on the bus route. Miller asked about the overflow water from retention ponds. He said the downhill grade takes it to the street, which would run across his property. Gjersvik explained that all of those details would have to be worked out through a site plan process if this continues on to be developed.

With no further public comments, Pudenz closed the public hearing. Quick stated that they had a number of different layouts from the developer and engineer. They have not done their storm water engineering yet. Pudenz asked about a stubbed road on the plan. Shaw explained it was a private road which would make a natural entrance onto 34th. Pudenz asked about the parking lot drive which appears to extend to the south slightly behind Miller's home. Brent Jackman (Hall & Hall Engineers) stated that is 2015 IFC compliant turnaround.

Henry moved to approve the recommendation of a comprehensive plan land use map amendment request from Lemar Koethe and Woda Cooper Development for 4.64 acres of land from Commercial/Industrial Mixed Use to High Density Residential for a proposed project called Adam's Crossing, subject to deficiencies. Seconded by Pudenz.

Votes: Yes—Henry, Pudenz, Gjersvik, Moyna, Sloan. No—None. Motion approved, 5-0.

4. Continue public hearing, consideration and recommendation of a rezoning request from Lemar Koethe and Woda Cooper Development for 4.64 acres of land from A-1 (Agricultural) to R-3 (Multi-family Residential) for a proposed project called Adam's Crossing.

With no further comments from applications or questions from Commission members, Pudenz opened the hearing to public comments. With no public comments, Pudenz closed the public hearing.

Henry moved to approve the recommendation of a rezoning request from Lemar Koethe and Woda Cooper Development for 4.64 acres of land from A-1 (Agricultural) to R-3 (Multi-family Residential) for a proposed project called Adam's Crossing, subject to deficiencies. Seconded by Pudenz.

Votes: Yes—Henry, Pudenz, Gjersvik, Moyna, Sloan. No—None. Motion approved, 5-0.

5. Minutes of the November 27, 2018 meeting.

Moyna moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Pudenz. Votes: Yes—Moyna, Pudenz, Sloan, Gjersvik. No—None. Pass—Henry. Motion approved, 4-0.

6. Old Business:

Shaw explained the Lemar Koethe piece was approved for annexation last week. Another annexation has been deferred until February 2019.

7. New Business:

Shaw explained that Graham Construction will be coming forward with a site plan to build a 1.2 million square foot warehouse development across from Facebook. It will be two phases and four buildings. A developer has closed on the properties east of Walmart between Car-X and Adventureland and will be coming forward with a rezoning plat application for the February meeting to include three commercial buildings and one multi-family building.

Sloan moved to adjourn. Seconded by Gjersvik. Votes: Yes—Sloan, Gjersvik, Moyna, Henry, Pudenz. No—None. Motion approved, 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m. Next meeting is January 29, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Naylor
Office Assistant