

June 15, 2021

7:00 p.m.

Planning Department

City Annex Building

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Commissioners Brent Dixon, Arnold Cantu, Joanne Denney, Gene Hicks, Natalie Black, George Morrison, Margaret Wimborne.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Lindsey Romankiw

**ALSO PRESENT:** Planning Director Brad Cramer; Assistant Planning Directors Kerry Beutler, Caitlin Long, Brian Stevens, Anas Almassrahy and interested citizens.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Brent Dixon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA:** None.

**Miscellaneous:**

**Comprehensive Plan Workshop.** Cramer thanked the Commissioners for coming to an extra meeting. There were new staff members who introduced themselves, including Anas Almassrahy, Planner 2, Historic Preservations; and Caitlin Long, Planner 1. The Commissioners introduced themselves: Margaret Wimborne, works at School district been on the Commission for over 10 years; Brent Dixon, works at EROB building been on the Commission for 20ish years; Arnold Cantu, Administrator for Community Family Clinics in Idaho Falls and Blackfoot, been on the Commission a few years; George Morrison, retired been on Commission 10 years; Gene Hicks, retired, Idaho resident for 85 years been on the Commission 4 years; Natalie Black, works for School District, been on Commission 10 years, and loves landscaping; Joanne Denney, School teacher in District 93, been on Commission 5 years.

Cramer gave an update on the ImaginIF project. Cramer stated that they were thinking of this plan when an article was published a planning magazine in 2016 showing how planning is different in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Cramer stated that the Plan that Idaho Falls has is a classic 20-30 years ago plan and things have since evolved. Sustaining Places Best Practices was a publication by the American Planning Association that outlined what the 21<sup>st</sup> Century plan should have if it is following best practices, including these 3 categories: Principles, Processes and Attributes that a plan needs to follow. Cramer stated that these have influenced what staff has done, including healthy community and how the building community effects our health. Cramer indicated that the City hired Virtuian Planning in partnership with the CBDG Program to do a community health assessment and that will influence the plan. Cramer stated that they asked questions in the City about the 7 elements of health including: social, economic, physical, mental etc. Those aspects will tie into place making, community, landscaping, etc. in a way that discusses how our health is influenced.

Cramer indicated that in terms of process they have spent a lot of time at that spot. Authentic participation and accountable implementation. Cramer stated that they have worked hard to be authentic in the participation and include everyone that they could, including getting a statistically valid survey, unscientific organic conversations with neighborhoods, and they will do that again. Cramer stated that this plan, unlike previous plans will have specific implementation strategies and goals and estimated timelines.

Cramer indicated that Consistent Content and Coordinated Characteristics is a lot about making sure they are working with other departments, and other communities and making sure the internal documents are telling the same story.

Cramer stated that based on those items and public outreach, they have come up with 5 themes that are City wide things, including: housing, transportation and connectivity, employment and economic, community design, and healthy community. Cramer stated that is City wide, and the projects and policies will be centered around those 5 themes. Cramer stated that the neighborhood things will be the top 3.

Cramer stated that instead of having a stagnant plan for the next 10 years, this plan will be a living process and document, not a huge binder full of documents. Cramer stated that the goal is to revisit this Plan every year like the zoning code to make tweaks. Cramer stated that every 3-5 years they will do a major update, but every year they will take a look at it. Cramer stated that they are building a minimum viable product, which means they will be built as best they can in the time they are allotted and then spend time measuring how it is working, learn from that, and adjust, and continue in that cycle repeatedly over the life of the Plan. Cramer stated that the goal is to be done in January with a minimum viable product that will be adopted and then revised and built upon over the coming years.

Cramer stated that there are a lot of documents from the City that are influencing the Plan to maintain accountable implementation with the goals and objectives that the City Council wants to see from their perspective. Cramer reiterated that the goal is to make sure everything (all documents) is telling a consistent story.

Cramer stated that in 2020 they couldn't go out and talk a lot, so they focused on the background studies, reports and outreach design and visioning on what the plan should look like. Cramer stated that in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021 they focused on public outreach to identify themes. They have focused on laying out the document. Cramer stated that 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2021 they are finishing the public outreach and focusing on the text of the document. Cramer stated that they have drafted all of the neighborhood reports and recommended policies they have come up with and hope to get more from the Commission tonight. Cramer hopes by mid-July to have a draft of the entire plan done. Cramer stated that by July 12 they want to go to the public with round 2 of outreach and will pose to the public questions that help prioritize the projects and policies and find out what is most important to them and give them possible solutions to the issues they raised and decide which ones are viable. July 27 will have a public workshop; close the survey in August and then start fine tuning the draft to get it in front of the Commission by early to mid-October and City Council in November/December.

Cramer stated that in 2021 they will find case studies and decide how things work in other places and build them into the plan, and how can those projects apply in Idaho Falls. Cramer stated that the missing middle report has some flaws because it doesn't consider weather, so where has this worked in similar climates, so they don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Cramer showed a sampling from the plan.

Cramer explained what a place type is and why they are doing it. Cramer indicated that words like low density, high density, commercial doesn't paint a good and clear big picture and vision for the area, including landscaping, streets, mix of uses, etc. Cramer indicated that they do use

place types in the Downtown Plan and Downtown Code and the South Downtown Code. Cramer showed how the Downtown Code is laid out with the description of the big place, the district that is a carved out geographical area that fits the place types model, (Downtown is a District within the urban center place type), and then you can break it down into Subdistricts (block by block to see what makes sense). Cramer stated that this all starts with the overall place type and describing that place type, are there trees, big houses, pathways, busses. Cramer stated that this is more than land use, it is an overall scheme of what is happening. Then you define the district within the place type, then the different sub districts within that District. Brian Stevens has spent time figuring out how the current designations can fit within the standard place type scales. Cramer stated that low density can fit within urban and suburban, but if you simplify it and describe the overall place and all the things that could happen there in a more narrative way, it paints a better picture than simply focusing on the number.

Cramer opened it up to comments from Commissioners.

Morrison loved the idea of updating and keeping the plan more current.

Dixon stated that the scale of the place types will help to define so they know how much room they need (1 block, 2 blocks etc.).

Black likes the descriptions being more descriptive so you can get a visual for it, rather than just a number.

Cramer urged the Commissioners to use the sticky notes so they can help write the descriptions as they answer the questions asked by staff.

Black asked if they could make comments on the survey results. Black commented that they need to make sure they have landscaping, but also ample parking. Black commented that she saw in Denver or Boise a strip mall that looked really good with beautiful landscaping, parking, and the buildings were straight, but had dimension, and it looked better than what we see with the big strip mall and payment and 2 trees and grass. Black commented that housing has diversity and the City is getting more diversity with the little vacant lots and the tiny homes. Black commented that the housing on 1<sup>st</sup> and Lomax will add a lot of housing, along with Freeman Park new housing. Black toured some townhomes in Denver that were 3 levels, and she doesn't feel that she wants that, but with housing costs so expensive she is not sure what to do. Black asked what is going on behind the bowling alley. Cramer indicated that it is housing. Black commented that they do need great new developments but is disappointed that the road structure and entrances could be made beautiful. Black urged them to focus on the infill and vacant lots as well as redevelopment and looking into areas that are ready to be redeveloped like old Fred Meyer building. Black commented that transportation is becoming a nightmare, but there haven't been any upgrades or growth in infrastructure with all the housing going south of Holmes. Black stated that other areas of the City need upgrades with parks, City landscaping, etc.

Cramer encouraged the Commissioners to take the spread sheet and mark it up and tell staff what they want to keep, and what to get rid of. Black stated that she feels they should keep most of it. Cramer indicated that is a reoccurring theme.

Staff and Commissioners broke off into different tables to discuss topics.

After discussing with the Commissioners, Staff presented what was heard during discussion.

Beutler presented that he heard a need for imagination due to lack of character. Beutler presented that there are a lot of cookie cutter, and they need to avoid that. Beutler presented that they need a way to develop a sense of community with entrances into developments as well as connectivity to parks and schools. Beutler presented that a “place to gather” was discussed frequently, as well as walkable centers near services, and infill development prior to moving out.

Foster presented that Transportation and Healthy Community. Foster presented that they heard that they need more parks and walking paths south of Sunnyside. Foster presented that they want more restaurants and shopping areas south of Sunnyside. More pocket parks in the older neighborhoods around town. Trails around the perimeter of new subdivisions. Foster presented that there were comments about a fixed route for transportation. More recreation or activities for kids, such as pickle ball, outdoor ice rinks, groomed trails for cross-country skiing. Foster presented that a walkable center was defined as within a few blocks of home or parking and provides services for daily goods, entertainment, etc. Foster presented that they heard a lot about dead areas where anchor stores are leaving and those places could provide a big opportunity of change in the City (Smiths, behind Big Lots) and how those anchor stores have aged and there is a lack of landscaping and lots of concrete.

Long presented Commercial. Long presented that they heard a need for a sense of place, having attractive commercial nodes and areas that people want to go to. Long presented that 1<sup>st</sup> Street was discussed as an area with potential to make it walkable center. Walkable centers need access to daily services and how do you access these daily services with parking, walking. Good examples were Snake River Landing, Taylor Crossing. Older commercial needs help and revitalization and how to bring in landscaping, which ties back into the form-based place type of creating areas that are attractive that you want to go to. Long presented that as the City develops and grows such as the south and the north those areas are commercial deserts and how do you plan ahead for that as development comes in. Long presented that the medical by Sunnyside and Hitt is good, but there is a need for more medical in different parts of the City such as west side of Idaho Falls. Long presented that place making is not just commercial and a building that hits all the requirements, but rather a place you want to go, it is attractive.

Dixon added that if you want to be walkable you cannot go along the main road, but rather need to be off the main road so you do not have cross the main road to get to everything.

Cramer asked if this was useful for the Commissioners and if they wanted to have more meetings like this. Unanimously the Commissioners were in favor of more actual “planning” meetings.

Dixon stated that when they put words on paper, they need to decide what the words suggest, and do they suggest what the Commission wants, or how can they be misused by developers to cut corners and the City ends up with something that is not wanted.

Morrison added that sometimes the public misunderstands the Plan.

Wimborne stated that she was talking to someone this week and they were frustrated by some of the growth and development on the south side of town and they said that the Planning Commission is looking at zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances and there is no “planning” that regulates traffic and infrastructure and making sure there is schools and commercial. Wimborne stated that the Commission needs to realize that the Comprehensive

Plan is still only a guiding document. Wimborne struggles with how the Commission plans the community and fills in the gaps. Cramer asked if she is talking about how to take it from being aspirational to a requirement (regulatory things). Wimborne agreed. Wimborne stated that the School District buys land tries to plan ahead where schools will be, but unless the community will pass a bond the schools cannot be built.

Next meeting July 6, 2021.

Dixon adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:45 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted**

**Beckie Thompson, Recorder**