

All Public Hearings And Action Items Related To Thrivent

City Plan Commission

Wed, Jul 24, 2024 3:30PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 01:03

All right. So just before we get into a presentation here, I'll just explain to folks how we're how we're gonna manage this afternoon. We actually have three separate public hearings all related to the Thrivent land discussion. And in the interest of making this more understandable and inclusive for everybody who's here to speak, what we're going to do is we'll take comment—we'll open the first hearing, and we'll take general comments on the items that will be addressed in each of the hearings, rather than making folks who are here to speak determine whether they're speaking on the land use map amendment, or the overlay district, and so on.

Mayor Jake Woodford 01:53

So just so that we're clear, when we open the first hearing, all of the items will be subject to public comment. We'll still open and close each public hearing. So, we'll go through that process as we go. But I just wanted to make that clear for folks who are here to talk, we want to hear you and we want to make it as simple as possible for your input. So, before we get into the public hearing, I'd like to ask Don Harp to give us an overview of the items before the commission today. Don Harp, go ahead.

Principal Planner Don Harp 02:27

Thank you, Mayor. We have three applications that have been submitted for zoning entitlement request, the first being a future land use map amendment. The second is a planned development amendment to an existing planned unit development that had been approved in 2000, designated as number 4-00. And also, we have a zoning request from agricultural zoning and part of the plan development going to an R-2 district.

Principal Planner Don Harp 02:57

The entitlement requests are being made to establish the land use and zoning district regulations for the property which would allow the development team to finalize their engineering drawings for the design of the proposed lots, the layouts, the green space, and any other infrastructure to support the concept plan as well as the new corporate office for Thrivent.

Principal Planner Don Harp 03:22

So, in the future, there would be some future actions before the planning commission. So, this would not be the final time that this would be before the commission. We'd be looking at platting requirements and also site plan review and approval prior to development and construction permits being issued for any of the development of properties within the development.

Principal Planner Don Harp 03:45

The master concept plan that we have on the screen illustrates a variety of uses. We have housing options that could include single family, two-family, multifamily housing, and townhomes. Some of those are designated in the yellow area would be primarily like a single family. The orange is also a single family but on smaller parcels, and some of the yellow areas represented would be multifamily. And also, there's some mixed-use buildings which would have first floor commercial with residential above, and then also a mix of commercial areas in addition to some outdoor recreational opportunities, which would include open space, trail system, and park land.

Principal Planner Don Harp 04:30

At this time, the plan commission is not taking action on locking in any of the specific building footprints or the road designs or any of the other elements that are shown on the concept plan. The concept plan was simply utilized as a tool for the planned development amendment to establish the new zoning regulations which would apply specific to the planned development district.

Principal Planner Don Harp 04:55

So, with that in mind, I can jump into the future land use map amendment request to facilitate the conceptual plan as well as the Thrivent new office. So currently the future land use plan exhibit represents commercial future land use for a majority of the property as well as some agricultural and open space, which is identified as the green areas. The yellow area to the north is currently future land use for one and two family. So, the request is to amend the existing map to go from a commercial future land use to mixed-use which is the pink area and then also expanding the future one and two family in the yellow area, which would be changing some of the commercial to a one- and two-family designation as well as eliminating the agriculture and open space. The agricultural and open space designation was primarily kind of representing some drainage corridors that were on the property—more or less drainage swales. So that's really not relevant. So, we decided to be more simple to identify two different land use categories.

Principal Planner Don Harp 06:07

So, the action before the planning commission is to make a recommendation to the Common Council as to whether or not the request is consistent with the goals and policies of the comprehensive land use plan.

Principal Planner Don Harp 06:22

The second request relates to the existing plan development overlay district, which is the PDC 2 number 4-00. That's been in existence since 2000, and it has not been amended. So, there are current zoning regulations that are in place, but primarily the only use on the property was identified as the current corporate office and the monument signage, and they have some setback regulations. And that would relate to the building, meaning the existing corporate office.

Principal Planner Don Harp 06:56

So, on the screen to the left which is the current, zoning is identified in green. So, to the north, you'll see agricultural. As I work my way down to the south, we have a 10-acre existing agricultural zone property, and then we go down to an R two district, and then that's separated by the planned development district as well as there's a little R1A along Mead Street. And the request is to amend the planned dis—planned unit development C2-0—or excuse me, -400, which is on the on the zoning map represented in the red line work, which would follow the curvature to the south of the—north and south of the existing corporate office, which is roughly 381 acres. And then the remainder of the property to the north would follow the request for the rezoning going to the R2 District which would be the 181 acres.

Principal Planner Don Harp 08:02

Also, with the planned unit development the plan commission, under consideration is the implementation plan document. And that spells out the rules and regulations for all the development that would occur within the plan development boundary. So, things like permitted uses, building setbacks, building height, lot coverages, parking standards, that regulation would be a recordable document in the Outagamie County Register of Deeds office if this moved forward as a document of record. And we would use that as the tool to facilitate development projects in the future.

Principal Planner Don Harp 08:38

The R2 districts simply would just fall under our current base R2 districts, which would allow for one- and two-family development to occur in that area if it went to residential. With that being said, staff is recommending approval of the all three request, per our staff recommendation and analysis in our staff report.

Mayor Jake Woodford 09:01

Thank you. All right. So, before we open the public hearing, the way we manage public hearings is it's an opportunity for members of the public to address the commission. This will not be a dialogue between the commission and members of the public, or representatives of organizations. But we will be taking your questions if we hear questions as you're giving comments raising concerns. Staff will also be making note of your questions, and we'll do our best to answer the questions that come up over the course of the process as they pertain to the items before the commission. And any answers that we can't give you today we will we will prepare answers when this item appears before the Council in the future.

Mayor Jake Woodford 09:48

So, with that, we'll open the public hearing. This is item 24-0927 Comprehensive Plan 2010 to 2030 future land use map amendment number 1-24 for the subject parcels located at 4321 North Ballard Road and 3920 North Mead Street. And with that, this is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? And your name and address or affiliation for the record, please?

Eric Merriman (Thrivent) 10:16

Yeah. My name is Eric Merriman, Director of Real Estate and Workplace services with Thrivent. So, I just want to introduce myself quickly and introduce the project. About a year ago Thrivent announced our intent to develop the—to look into developing a master plan for this land, and we're really excited to be here to kick off that process. We remain committed to our employees and clients in the area. And so, what I'd like to what I'd like to jump to next is we've hired Land by Label, an organization to help us kick this development off. So, they are driving our entitlement strategy and moving us through to construction. So, I'll introduce Emily Cialdini, Vice President of Development.

Emily Cialdini (Land By Label) 11:00

Great, thank you, Eric. Emily Cialdini, Vice President of Development for Land by Label, the master developer for the project. I'd like to thank the planning commission for the consideration of our application and thank staff for the coordination to date on the project.

Emily Cialdini (Land By Label) 11:17

Mr. Harp did a great job of explaining and running through the applications, but there were just a couple of things I wanted to touch on or highlight for the commission. You know, Mr. Harp touched on the fact that this master plan is really just a starting point to guide the development standards for the project. And I think that's true. But it's also an inspiring vision I think for the master plan. We're really excited to be a part of it, and we think it incorporates the best design principles for mixed use master plan communities. So, it offers a mix of employment, retail, dining, shopping, and housing, and even the housing has a pretty wide range from single family, to apartments, to townho—to town homes and houses. We think that really appeals to a very wide demographic of people, and we're—you know, it'll help support the businesses and employers that will be part of this master development as well.

Emily Cialdini (Land By Label) 12:24

The master plan also isn't without input from the community to date. The Thrivent team held two large scale community meetings and workshops in fall of 2023. We had we had over 400 people participate in those public

comment workshops. We had about 1600 people respond to community surveys through that process as well. The overwhelming feedback that we got from the survey results was that people wanted to see a lot of green space preserved, enhanced walking trails expanded as part of this master plan. So that has really informed kind of the concept today. So, you'll notice, I have got a poster board of the master plan over there, but a very large expansive greenway loop; it's about 30% of the site is preserved as open green space, and we've got over six miles of walking trails and connections that connect to the to the larger community. And that's been one of the key features and guiding principles of this master plan to make sure that's publicly accessible, available, and really restores the natural landscape.

Emily Cialdini (Land By Label) 13:37

We've also continued to post updates to ThriventDevelopment.com. So, I saw a couple of people taking pictures of some of the precedent imagery that that's on the poster board here. That all was posted last fall on the website. So, if you want more information, it's all it's all there. We've also linked some, you know, community feedback opportunities since our application when went into the city. So, since that time, we've had about 40 people respond through that method. Again, most of the feedback we've received has been enthusiasm and excitement for the master plan. So, we've been excited to see that.

Emily Cialdini (Land By Label) 14:18

There's also been a lot of coordination to date with city staff on the master plan. Very grateful for the input and feedback via two concept detailed, concept reviews, and we expect that coordination to continue as we advance the project through the platting phase as Mr. Harp had noted.

Emily Cialdini (Land By Label) 14:38

One other item that I just wanted to mention because it is something that we've heard from community members and neighbors is just the concern for the traffic impact that a master plan like this may have. So, I wanted to let everyone know that a traffic impact analysis is underway. We've retained Traffic Analysis and Design, and so what they will study is the existing traffic volumes and patterns today that occur on site and intersections surrounding the site, and then they'll look at the estimated traffic volumes and patterns when this project is fully built out. That traffic analysis will then summarize and recommend certain traffic improvements—so traffic signals, turn lanes, traffic calming methods—to ensure safe and efficient traffic patterns upon full build out of the site. So that coordination will continue with staff throughout the process. We just thank you again for your time. We are here to respond to any questions or comments that come up when appropriate. Happy to happy to address them. But thank you again.

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:52

This is a public hearing. Anybody wish to speak? Please come forward if you'd like to. See somebody in the back there, if you'd like to. Your name and address for the record please.

Bob M. (Resident) 16:11

[Bob M.] Address is [XXXXX] Apple Creek Road. So, it's right across from the development. I guess my concern—and she did bring it up about traffic patterns—living on Apple Creek Road, and everybody knows that people from Appleton come out to the park, that is the bike pattern and walk pattern for that space. The thing that's going to be coming up if they have road traffic coming into that space is that it's gonna it's gonna get more congested. I think the—looking at the surrounding areas, you have the area-over by the Appleton North and the fire station, you have our own boat set up already. I'm thinking at that so called corner of Apple Creek Road and JJ, maybe an idea to maybe round—put a roundabout in place in that space because of so much traffic coming in that space. It's just my own personal idea that's been talked about amongst a couple of us. But we have a lot of

walking traffic going through there—day, night, bicycles, young people, old people, people walking their dogs. It's just a natural area for everybody coming.

Bob M. (Resident) 17:30

I know they have set up along the wooded area, another walking path to go up, I believe up to the park. I'm thinking that's what your thoughts are. So again, it's congesting more area in that space. A new elementary school is getting built. We're getting a lot of people off it and a lot of traffic. You can't get off our driveway coming out in the morning with the with the cars coming. And it's a real bear at night with the traffic coming back between the two high schools. It's an issue. I'm thinking that safety wise I don't know how they're going to put it together. I'd personally a roundabout in that corner may be an idea. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 18:10

Thank you. This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? If you arrived late, we're taking comment on all three of the items. Come on up. If you'd like to speak, I just asked you to come right—don't be afraid. We're good. Come on up. Just you're—it's okay. We're friendly here. So. So go ahead. Just your name and address for the record.

Colin S. (Resident) 18:37

Yeah. [Colin S.] I live right off Silverleaf Court there on the southeastern part of a—butting up to the property, southeastern part of the property. I know, I was trying to make sense of some of these requests, and I don't know necessarily if my concerns have much to do with what we were planning on doing with things today. I guess I'm referencing kind of the master plan, and I don't know what kind of addendums are expected, if any, what level of—what magnitude of community input is actually being valued and actually has dividends when it comes to the implementation of everything.

Colin S. (Resident) 19:31

But long story short is I'm located right in that small neighborhood over there. The southeastern part, I know a lot of the community surveys we're really striving to kind of identify, you know, what we are concerned about and what we do or don't want to have happen. And I know preservation of as much as possible was a big thing I saw in a lot of those community surveys, and essentially, that agricultural plot that looks like it's related to C2 on the master plan. And it stretches all the way up to a prospective hotel potentially. Yeah, again, so yeah, if you zoom in there on that C2 quadrant and then pushing all the way up towards highway 41 to where there tends to be a hotel. That area, it looks like, I'm pretty sure is the agricultural plot that's I'm looking at off of our property.

Colin S. (Resident) 20:37

I don't know, I'm just concerned, I mean, and a fair amount of my neighbors are as well, that property value is going to be affected by any kind of commercial developments and especially a hotel, that would be not very far. So, I don't know if there would be any way addendum-wise to incorporate or keep the natural beauty of that southeastern quadrant with essentially either altering where that commercial district and hotel would be somewhere else in the 600-acre plot. I don't expect it to just disappear. That's obviously not up to me. I'm not part of Thrivent. I have no stake in it. But ultimately, the alteration of that space, whether it be a development into an extending park of some form, or some natural entity that would have probably very little effect on property value and home value in general, but I, in my opinion, it would be a heck of a lot more favorable. And I had pointed out specifically, you know, in an email to a couple individuals who may or may not have a stake in any of this, that's a possible place that, again, I don't know all the details, utilities, etc., that would be included in that space, but essentially taking that C2 plot of retail, commercial, whatever that would constitute, and re—essentially putting it between what looks to be potential office space, on the southwestern corner of the 600 acre plot.

Colin S. (Resident) 22:24

Again, I have—it looks like there's an open spot there. There's obviously got to be utilities for commercial development, if you're going to put office buildings there. So, I'm thinking as an alternative space, instead of right across from housing, it would be instead put over there or at least consideration would be put over there. Again, I think it's got a couple benefits. I think it might have better advertisement potential for any commercial retail groups that do go into those spaces as it's closer to the highway, probably more traffic, people seeing that the businesses in two. Again, I think it's potentially self-reinforcing for people that would be working in these office spaces to have the convenience and commercial districts right next to them, instead of having to essentially go across the entire 600-acre plot to go to commercial districts that are originally were C2R.

Colin S. (Resident) 23:24

So essentially, just potentially addending and moving things, rearranging to (a) preserve that southeastern quadrant as more of a natural park space and not as concrete jungle like, and again, moving the space entirely, if possible, or reconfiguring in a different way, again, for the betterment of hopefully our home value. And, yeah, to just give us I guess, mainly the home value. I mean, that's what I'm worried about. We just built a new house. We all know what the housing market looks like, right now. It's not the most stable thing. And I'd hate to have something affect that—have a long-term effect on me and my neighbors as well.

Colin S. (Resident) 24:15

So yeah, those are the main things that I, again, I have a stake in. I don't, again, I don't know if this hearing has anything at all to do with what I just said, from an addendum standpoint or concern standpoint, but that's really the only thing that I feel like could be given some consideration to keep property values in a affluent part of the city of Appleton stable. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 24:47

Thank you. And I would just suggest that we do have folks from the development team here. Some of I think what's what you're talking about has more to do with site plan and concept, and I know they've been open to taking comment along the way. I trust that remains the case. I see them nodding. So might be worth just trying to try to grab a conversation. We also have the email that you sent, and that that will be entered into the record also. Thank you, Colin. All right, this is a public hearing. Others wish to speak? Please, your name and affiliation for the record.

Ben Evens (WI DNR) 25:23

My name is Ben Evans. I work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. So, and I wanted to address—we have a air monitoring station that is on this land, and it's currently I believe, that we're like around the border of the green space and the single housing zoning. So, I just wanted to see or just, I guess, raise awareness that we're there, and we've been there for about 30 years measuring ozone and particulate matter. And we're just hoping to, I mean, I guess to—that the zoning doesn't change where our stand's there, or if it could—I don't know if it does or not—if we could, I know that we might have some like commercial space there in this area. We were open to ideas and just bringing it up to you that like having our monitoring site could be almost like a public type place where people—if there's something in that plan, where they could come in and see the equipment and just and learn like a nature type thing or something nature-wise, we were up to or open to the idea. And I didn't know if that was something up to you or Thrivent to talk about, but I just want to kind of raise awareness that we're there and that we're kind of like on that border zone of where zoning could be. I don't know if it would be an issue. We're just bringing that up.

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:55

Okay.

Ben Evens (WI DNR) 26:55

Thank you very much.

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:56

Thank you. I'd make a similar suggestion to you that might be worth at least exchanging cards with the development team just to have a deeper conversation with that. But staff's also made note of your question in terms of the impact that that Plan Commission's actions today might have. And we'll take that up when we get into discussion. Anyone else wish to speak?

Mayor Jake Woodford 27:28

This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? Hearing none, I declare that public hearing closed.

Mayor Jake Woodford 27:44

We'll move on now to our next public hearing. Even though we took general comments in the last one, still a public hearing. So fair game, and same rules apply. So, if you have comments in general, we'll be happy to take your comments. This is public hearing item 24-0929 amendment to plan development overlay district for the subject parcels located at 4321 North Ballard Road, amending the existing zoning boundary from R2 to—and R1A to planned overlay general development—planned development overlay general commercial district. This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? Hearing none I declare that public hearing closed. If you're picking up on the pattern, I have to say it three times. I know you hear me.

Mayor Jake Woodford 28:48

All right. This is public hearing 24-0931 rezoning number 6-24 for the subject parcels located at 4321 North Ballard Road, amending the current R2 two-family district zoning boundary line from ag district and plan development overlay general commercial district to R2 two family district. This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? This is a public hearing. Is there anyone who wishes to speak? Hearing none I declare that public hearing closed.

Mayor Jake Woodford 29:27

All right, we'll move on now to our action items, first of which is item 24-0928 request to approve comprehensive plan 2010 to 2030 future land use map amendment number 1-24 for the subject parcels located at 4321 North Ballard Road and 3920 North Mead Street. We have a motion. We have a motion and a second to approve, and we'll open the floor for discussion. Alder Hayden. All right, go ahead.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 30:03

Thank you, Chair. I wanted to take a moment to thank Thrivent for soliciting input of the community, and also their commitment to make green space a cornerstone of this development. In talking with my constituents, I've told them that the discussions on traffic and drainage are a little premature, but those are the two items I would like you to kind of think about as the plan is kind of developed over the next decade or so. And I would also issue a challenge to Thrivent to continue to ask for feedback from the community and keep them in the in the loop about development as it moves forward. I know this is going to be a multi decade development. But I think he

did an outstanding job and engaging the community early. I would just like to see you kind of keep following through as plans develop over time. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 30:54

I know we had a couple of que—there was at least one question about the air monitoring and if zoning would—if we're aware of any impact on that. Don.

Principal Planner Don Harp 31:04

Regardless of where it's located on the property with the zoning change going to R2 and keeping the plan development C2 overlay district with those regulations, both districts do permit governmental facilities as a permitted use. So, the definition that we have in our current code would accommodate the air monitoring system because the DNR is a governmental agency.

Mayor Jake Woodford 31:27

So that's really more, it sounds like a matter between the property owner and the governmental agency to sort out those details.

Principal Planner Don Harp 31:31

Right. If there's something that re—results in a in a potential relocation of that monitoring system, then it would be between the property owner and the DNR to get together and come up with an alternative location. But as far as a zoning district permitted use category, it's permitted there so would not be prohibited.

Mayor Jake Woodford 31:55

Thank you. And perhaps I should have said at the outset of this discussion, today the plan commission is really addressing the matters of land use and zoning. So, a lot of questions and concerns related to site plan issues and traffic considerations, things like that. Those elements of the project come later in the process, but certainly important, and we appreciate—the commission appreciates hearing the input today. And I'm glad that we have representatives from the project team here also to hear that input and those concerns, and there will continue to be opportunities for members of the community to share input, both with the city of Appleton but I would expect also with the development team.

Mayor Jake Woodford 32:43

So, as we are getting into now discussion and deliberation, I just want to make clear that the comments and feedback we've heard about site related issues, plan planning related issues, conceptual issues, we have certainly heard those. The purpose of today's discussion and deliberation for the plan commission relates specifically to land use and zoning, so that that's the basis for the staff analysis that was done and also the basis of the discussion that we'll have today as a planning commission. With that we'll continue discussion. Discussion from the commission?

Mayor Jake Woodford 33:24

One of the things that I'd like to just point out, if folks have not had the opportunity to read the materials that were completed by staff, there's an extensive staff analysis that helps give some context about what the city—what city staff are evaluating as they consider an application, and that's helpful context for us as a plan commission as we consider items that come before us but also helpful for members of the community to get a sense of what the basis for the analysis is and what the parameters of the decisions that we have to make are. And so those are laid out fairly extensively in the staff analysis, and I would just encourage anybody with questions or concerns about the items that are before us today to review those in the materials. Because there's a lot of great information in there.

Mayor Jake Woodford 34:18

I'd also note that, that we're happy to take questions from members of the public, from the community about these items now and between the time that plan commission addresses the items today and when they come before Council. So please don't hesitate to ask us questions and send your request for information. We'll do our best to get you answers. Whether you're here or you're listening, or you hear about this later, this is this is this will be an ongoing discussion and process, and we want to make sure we're open and hearing that input from the community as we go.

Mayor Jake Woodford 34:54

If there's no further discussion from the Commission, we have a motion and a second to approve. All those in favor, please signify by saying aye. Aye. Any opposed? With none opposed that item is approved.

Mayor Jake Woodford 35:09

Next is item 24-0930 request to approve amendment to plan development overlay district for the subject parcels located at 4321 North Ballard Road. And with that, I'll entertain a motion.

Richard Carpenter (Commissioner) 35:25

Motion to approve.

Mayor Jake Woodford 35:27

We have a motion and a second to approve. Open the floor for discussion. Discussion or questions from the Commission? Hearing none, all those in favor please signify by saying aye. Aye. Any opposed? None opposed. That item has been approved.

Mayor Jake Woodford 35:50

Moving on. Item 24-0932 request to approve rezoning number 6-24 for the subject parcels located at 4321 North Ballard Road, amending the current R2 two-family district zoning boundary line from agricultural district and PDC to a planned development overlay general commercial district to R2 two family district. We have a motion and a second to approve. Discussion from the Commission? Hearing none, all those in favor, please signify by saying aye. Aye. Any opposed? None oppose that item is approved.

Mayor Jake Woodford 36:33

That concludes our action items for today. As I said before, this is an ongoing process and there will continue to be opportunities for members of the public to weigh in. This item—these items go September 4 to the Common Council. So again, thank you to members of the community who came, and look forward to the continued conversation as this proceeds.