

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
May 28, 2025

1. Call to Order at 6:00 pm

2. Roll Call – Chairperson DeBoer, Commissioners Bliesener, Lyon-Jenness, Brooks, ZA Harvey, CM Stoddard, Deputy Clerk Smith

- Motion to excuse Dean by Bliesener, supported by Brooks. All: Ayes

3. Approval of Minutes – April 23, 2025

- Motion to accept the minutes as written by Bliesener and supported by Lyon-Jenness. All: Ayes

4. Additions/Changes to the Agenda – None

- None

5. Citizen Comments

- No comments

6. Old Business

Completed draft text – R-T/C-1 districts

- ZA Harvey reminded commissioners that the Planning Commission is inherently deliberative, often weaving together philosophy and design.
- Planning Commission’s earlier discussions focused on overlay zones but ultimately shifted toward using form-based code elements directly into the R-T and C-1 districts. They chose to reimagine the R-T district as the “downtown neighborhood” and the C-1 district to the “downtown core.”
- To strengthen the link between zoning language and the Master Plan, ZA Harvey worked on clarifying the distinct roles of the C-1 and R-T districts. The intent language in the Master Plan was subsequently revised and expanded to reinforce these designations.
- ZA Harvey previously shared a draft of the R-T district revisions and the PC provided input. Tonight, she presented a completed draft of the R-T district along with the first full draft of the updated C-1 district.
- The revised intent statement more clearly identifies R-T as a stable residential neighborhood adjacent to downtown. She edited the principal permitted uses to reflect form-based standards.
- Previous discussions covered whether to expand permitted uses to include multi-family housing in the R-T district. The consensus had been not to do so, given that R-M zoning already covers such uses and many R-T properties are already nonconforming or mixed-use in character. They could list multi-family under special conditions.
- DeBoer asked whether a special condition use would be handled by the ZBA. ZA Harvey clarified special land uses differ from permitted uses. Permitted uses are “by right” as long as they meet standards. Special land uses give the PC discretion based whether the proposal negatively impacts adjacent properties. These decisions are not appealable except in circuit court. ZA Harvey emphasized that uses should only be listed as special land uses if the PC genuinely wants the ability to approve or deny them based on context. Anything they would never want should not be listed. For example, vehicle sales might be allowed in C-1 only on a case-by-case basis due to lighting and traffic impacts but a restaurant with a drive thru may never be allowed.

- ZA Harvey noted that several use categories were consolidated or removed for clarity, not to eliminate uses, but to streamline redundant listings and better align with the district's intent. For instance, R-T areas on Riverview are 95% single-family residential with minimal commercial intrusion. Given their stability, the proposed uses prioritize compatibility with the area, particularly for live/work usage.
- ZA Harvey asked the PC to look at specific uses and decide whether they wanted to open more uses or have more limitations. Professional offices and medical uses may occur in converted homes which is generally acceptable. However, high-impact uses such as clinics or banks may be inappropriate due to traffic and parking needs.
- Banks have been removed from the draft list since they have more site impact and may be inconsistent with neighborhood character. Lyon-Jenness raised concerns since banks are currently allowed in all commercial zones. ZA Harvey clarified banks are more than a financial office, and they are already covered in other zoning categories. Zoning terms must be applied consistently across districts.
- ZA Harvey proposed removing restaurants as permitted uses due to their parking and the potential exterior altering the character of the neighborhood. The intent of this area is "downtown neighborhood" with buildings that fit into that design. Bliesener stated a small café might be desirable but agreed the scale and character of the area would be potentially negatively impacted.
- Lyon-Jenness asked ZA Harvey's thoughts on municipal buildings, museums, and libraries in C-1. ZA Harvey noted that while these buildings are not home-based, they were not previously accounted for elsewhere and their needs fit this area.
- Under required conditions, she added outdoor storage of goods and materials which prohibits outdoor activity (sales, dining, drive-thrus) for non-residential uses. The PC may consider adding a blanket prohibition on drive-thrus to avoid non-restaurant uses.
- Form-based code integration in section 6.6 will incorporate form-based standards directly, replacing area and size requirements from Article 17. These standards include three categories: building form, architectural, and streetscape standards.
- Within the R-T building form standards, the PC previously decided to treat the east and west sides of Riverview differently. The addition to this section is the use of build-to lines rather than traditional front yard setbacks. These require new buildings to be constructed at a specific line to maintain the consistent streetscape. Rear and side setbacks remain flexible.
- A new building size standard is also introduced in the form-based standards. Historically zoning sets minimums but form-based standards shift to maximums to maintain the existing neighborhood character.
- Architectural standards are designed to mirror existing neighborhood conditions. The proposed standards ensure if a new development occurs, the form must reflect the character of existing structures. Many future uses will occur within existing homes, so new construction must follow guidelines regarding form and façade.
- Streetscape standards in R-T are less robust than C-1. Downtown core is where the focus lies. Streetscape improvements (sidewalks, lighting, and street trees) often occur within the right of way and the PC technically can't enforce zoning on private land. However, during site plan review, the PC can highlight city ordinances and refer to the city to coordinate implementation. Bliesener asked if someone could refuse to pay for a sidewalk. ZA Harvey stated that depends on the city's rules, not zoning. The hope is the city will use site activity as an opportunity to require consistent implementation of sidewalks and trees.

- Form-based codes are also used in C-1 but with a commercial intent. ZA Harvey updated the language here for consistency and clarity, combining and cleaning up prior permitted use descriptions. There are no lot size requirements and references to Article 17 have been removed.
- Building form standards are geared toward commercial use. ZA Harvey listed a zero foot build-to line as the PC has previously noted new buildings are to be placed directly at the sidewalk like existing buildings. Side yards may have a zero foot side setback if no windows exist on the side wall. Building height remains two-story. A new cap of 8,500 square feet is proposed based on the current largest building in the area. The PC can adjust this number up or down.
- Under architectural form standards, façade standards now includes any wall visible from a street, parking lot, park, or plaza—not just the street-facing side. Transparency standards support storefront appeal, requiring clear, non-mirrored windows suitable for retail display. ZA Harvey noted the PC will want to consider the guidelines for façade materials, awnings, and possible alternate guidelines for corner buildings.
- Streetscape in C-1 lists more elements than R-T including street furniture.
- Section 8.6 is a new provision added to C-1 allowing discretion in architectural standards during site plan review. This could be extended to R-T as well. This requires developers to engage with the PC on building exteriors.
- Bliesener asked if 8.6 is not also in R-T, can the PC still review the façade before building? ZA Harvey clarified the façade still comes before the PC but modifications must meet the requirements in Section 8.6.
- Chairperson DeBoer noted what ZA Harvey has suggested is not heavy handed. The city is small and any single development can have outsized impact. Strong form standards ensure we can absorb change without losing identity.
- ZA Harvey emphasized form-based standards shift the focus away from interior use and toward building appearance and contribution to public space.
- A memo in the packet discusses last month's conversation about C-1 being the "downtown core" and R-T being the "downtown neighborhood" but the official district names can't change. To clarify this framework, ZA Harvey suggests including language in the Master Plan, especially in the Future Land Use section (pages 33-35)
- Proposed changes to the Master Plan include:
 - Adding a third bullet under "Findings" to recognize Riverview Drive as a vital corridor and gateway to the community
 - Renaming the R-T category to "downtown neighborhood" in the Future Land Use portion.
 - Clarifying purpose language to clarify that R-T is intended to implement the "downtown neighborhood" vision
- ZA Harvey noted that the current Future Land Use map replicates the zoning map which it should not. The classifications should diverge to reflect broader planning goals.

7. New Business

Suggested Updates to Mill PUD (in response to design plan)

- ZA Harvey has not yet completed work on this. The Planning Commission will discuss Mill PUD at the next meeting.

8. Comments from Planning Commissioners

- Chairperson DeBoer noted the PC will have homework for their next meeting. He gave his thanks and best wishes to CM Stoddard as this is her last meeting with the Planning Commission. Deputy

Clerk Smith will take over on note taking duties. He thanked ZA Harvey for the thorough recap and asked if she could do this regularly.

- CM Stoddard advised she has spoken to Incoming City Manager Sarah Joshi, and she and Becky will coordinate the transition between City Managers. CM Joshi will be present at the next PC meeting.

9. Next Meeting on June 23, 2025 at 6pm

10. Adjournment – Motioned by Bliesener, supported by Brooks. All: Ayes. Meeting ended at 7:19pm.