

Business Park Master Plan Review Timeline

By: Nate Carlson

Summary

The following is an annotated timeline for the Northfield Business Park Master Plan. The timeline follows the final review stages of the Master Plan from November 2010 through May 2011. During this timeline, the review of the Master Plan took place among the City Council, Planning Commission and Economic Development Authority. The annotated timeline utilizes meeting minutes, staff reports, and memorandums to establish credibility.

November 18, 2010 – Northfield Planning Commission (PC) Work Session

Planning Commission members had the opportunity to review the draft Master Plan prior to a presentation delivered to Council on November 23. The consultant, Jeff McMenimen of HKGi, provided an overview of the drafted Master Plan. Commissioners had questions pertaining to plan adoption process, wind turbine use, definition of “raw land,” street designs, landscaping, workforce housing, and mixed-use designs.

Commissioners requested that the following language be added to the Mater Plan Document.

“Development controls could be implemented in a variety of ways, such as by introducing ‘absorption standards’ into the regulations, limiting total square footage of retail building footprint, making retail development contingent upon a number of existing employees, etc. Such regulatory specifics are outside the scope of the Master Plan, but additional language should be included in the Plan to clarify intent and lay the groundwork for the regulations governing the ED-F district.” (Commission November 18, 2010)

The primary concern by Planning Commission members was with respect to retail development in the area. Commissioners strongly recommended regulations that would result in industrial development occurring first. According to Commissioners, if retail were to develop prior to industrial use, “retail would develop in a manner that would preclude the industrial uses that are a desired component of the park.” (Commission November 18, 2010)

Planning Commission comments would be added to the document following the review and initial comments by City Council on November 23.

November 23, 2010 – PC Memorandum to City Council

Prior to the Council presentation, Planning Commission members submitted a memorandum as supplementary information for City Council consideration. The following are direct quotations from the memorandum.

“Development of a business and industrial park is consistent with the 2008 Comprehensive Plan objective of broadening Northfield’s tax base.”

“The Master Plan developed by HKGi (the consultant) is laudable in the degree to which it brings forward Northfield’s Comprehensive Plan priorities of energy and resource conservation, sustainability, and environmentally sound building practices.”

“The Planning Commission finds it difficult to reconcile the development of a business and industrial park on the north site with the Comprehensive Plan’s emphasis on ‘smart growth’ principles and compact development.”

“The Planning Commission remains concerned about how the residential and retail components of the Master Plan may be implemented.”

“Additional language should be included in the Plan to clarify intent and lay groundwork for the regulations governing the ED-F district.”

“The Planning Commission has a generally favorable view of the Business Park Master Plan draft, we believe there are grounds for concern which should be addressed.” (Commission, Comments on EDA/HKGi Business Park Master Plan November 23, 2010)

November 23, 2010 – City Council Work Session

City Council heard a presentation from Mr. McMenimen of HKGi consultants regarding the draft Business Park Master Plan. Input from the Steering Committee, Planning Commission and the three public open house meetings were discussed.

Comments from City Council members were provided to the consultant. No official minutes were taken during the course of this meeting. The Plan would not be reviewed until January 4, 2011 by City Council.

January 4, 2011 – City Council Meeting Item: 10

Following the initial review of the draft Master Plan, a “Business Park Plan Adoption Schedule” was presented to City Council. Staff presented the following motion to Council to begin the approval process:

“The City Council is being asked to approve the proposed timeline for approval of the Business park Master Plan. City Staff would like to present the master Plan to the City Council at its February 8, 2011 work session with final approval of the document by the City Council on February 15, 2011.” (Council January 4, 2011)

This motion was passed unanimously. The EDA was expected to approve the final draft of the Business Park Master Plan on January 27, 2011. However, the EDA did **not** hold a meeting on January 27, 2011.

February 8, 2011 – City Council Work Session

City Council members submitted questions to staff prior to the work session regarding the Business Park master Plan. Interim City Administrator, Tim Madigan, proposed the following recommendation:

“The Council...will have to decide if it wishes to approve/adopt the Plan as a guiding policy document for the City/EDA actions and projects, or to receive the Plan as a reference document, or to take no action on the Plan. At this stage, I would recommend the Council take time to study the Plan and to actively engage the Plan with modifications as deemed necessary. I would suggest that the Council schedule future meetings to engage these issues in more detail, but identify which sections need more study at this meeting.” (Tim Madigan February 8, 2011)

February 24, 2011 – Economic Development Authority (EDA) Meeting

Jody Gunderson, Economic Development Director, provided an update on the status of the Business Park Master Plan. He included the questions raised by Council members and the staff responses. This is the Q&A form that was incomplete for the February 8, 2011 Council Work Session.

March 1, 2011 – City Council Meeting Item 14

Following the February 8, 2011 Council Work Session, City staff requested Planning Commission to review the Business Park Master Plan. The following is the direct motion acted upon by City Council, which was passed by a 5-2 vote.

“Refer the Business Park Master Plan back to the Planning Commission to address those issues identified by the City Council and Planning Commission related to the Business Park Master Plan.” (Jody Gunderson March 1, 2011)

March 17, 2011 – PC Meeting

Staff presented an overview of the Plan status with respect to Council actions for Planning Commission input. Consultant McMenemin was in attendance and provided information when asked at the meeting. The central issue discussed at the meeting was regarding the development of retail and housing.

“The need is to develop regulations to ensure if these components do develop, they develop in the way that was envisioned and does not go off in a different direction.” (Commission, Discuss Business Park Master Plan as Requested by City Council March 17, 2011)

The consultant was responsible for providing language that addressed absorption rates pertaining to housing and retail development.

March 24, 2011 – EDA Meeting

Consultant provided overview of Planning Commission concerns. Broke it down to three key issues:

- Develop regulations to Control development of housing
- Develop regulations to control development of retail
- Civic uses need to be better defined

The consultant provided draft language that was to be included in the Master Plan Document. The document is titled “Memorandum to City Council and Planning Commission from Consultant” March 15, 2011.

April 6, 2011 – PC Meeting

The Planning Commission requested comment from HRA on housing component, specifically workforce housing.

April 21, 2011 – PC Meeting

Planning Commission discussed the March 15, 2011 Memorandum from HKGi consultant. Commissioners were tasked with completing the following objectives:

1. City jobs to housing ratio

2. Project area jobs to housing ratio
3. Establishing a square footage threshold relationship of business and industry square footage to either retail square footage developed or housing units developed within the area of the business and industrial park master plan
4. Establish a housing type ratio goal for the community that guides the concept of housing diversity by housing type
5. Establish a more definitive listing of uses for the master plan area
(P. Commission April 21, 2011)

May 5, 2011 – PC Meeting

Planning Commission approves minutes that detail the job and housing ratios decided at the April 21st meeting. Commissioners decided on the following:

“A motion was made by Herreid and seconded Imm to say that the Planning Commission recommends that the ratio 1.5:1 of jobs to housing be inserted into the Master Plan as a target to be achieved in the City of Northfield before substantial new housing development is approved in the north Business Park.”

“A motion was made by Schulte and seconded by Imm to say that the Planning Commission recommends that the Business Park Master Plan be revised to incorporate scenario 1 from the HKGi memo of April 21, 2011, with (a) the start of retail additions in the north Business Park to be triggered only after 20% of the planned industrial jobs in the park have been created, and (b) follow-up retail development to be phased with continuing industrial job additions in the Business Park. Furthermore, the Planning Commission recommends that the 20% figure be incorporated into the master Plan as a guideline and not as a prescriptive requirement pending future development of the land use regulations for the north Business Park.” (P. Commission April 21, 2011)

References

- Commission, Northfield Planning. November 23, 2010. "Comments on EDA/HKGI Business Park Master Plan." Memorandum, Northfield.
- Commission, Northfield Planning. March 17, 2011. "Discuss Business Park Master Plan as Requested by City Council." Northfield.
- Commission, Northfield Planning. November 18, 2010. "Planning Commission Work Session Minutes." Minutes, Northfield.
- Commission, Planning. April 21, 2011. "Review and Recommendation on Modifications to Business Park Master Plan." Northfield.
- Council, Staff Report for City. January 4, 2011. "Business Park Plan Adoption Schedule." Northfield.
- Jody Gunderson, Economic Development Director. March 1, 2011. "Request Planning Commission Suggest Language on Business Park Plan." Northfield.
- Tim Madigan, Interim City Administrator. February 8, 2011. "Economic Development Plans and Documents Review." Northfield.