MEETING MINUTES

LAND USE COMMISSION

Wednesday, December 4th, 2024
7:00 PM
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle City Council Chambers

Members Present:George Halik,, Kiril Mirintchev, Matt Rodgers, Brian Johnson, Max Puchtel, Jameika Mangum, Darush Mabadi

Members Absent: Myrna Arevalo, Jeanne Lindwall

Staff Present: Neighborhood Land Use Planner Meagan Jones, Senior Planner Sam Hubbard, Senior Housing Planner Uri Pachter, Planning Manager Liz Williams, Community Development Director Sarah Flax

Presiding Member: Matt Rodgers

I. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. Public Hearing | Text Amendment | Zoning Code - Envision Evanston 2045 | 24PLND-0043
City initiated Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, Title 6 of the City Code, to repeal Chapter 7, Zoning Districts and Map; Chapter 8, Residential Districts; Chapter 9, Business Districts; Chapter 10, Commercial Districts; Chapter 11, Downtown Districts; Chapter 12, Research Park District; Chapter 13, Transitional Manufacturing Districts; Chapter 14, Industrial Districts; and Chapter 15, Special Purpose and Overlay Districts. These chapters will be replaced with Chapter 3, Zoning Districts. The Land Use Commission makes a recommendation to the City Council, the determining body for this case in accordance with Section 6-3-4-6 of the Evanston Zoning Ordinance.

B. Public Hearing | Map Amendment | Official Zoning Map - Envision Evanston 2045 | 24PLND-0044
City initiated Map Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, Title 6 of the City Code, to redistrict all properties within the City of Evanston. The new zoning map is part of Envision Evanston 2045 and will remove all existing zoning and overlay districts and replace them with new districts. Interested parties can view the proposed map amendment at envisionevanston2045.com to review the proposed zoning for their parcel. The Land Use Commission makes a recommendation to the City Council, the determining body for this case in accordance with Section 6-3-4-6 of the Evanston Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Rodgers opened the public hearing by explaining the Land Use Commission's role as directed by the city code, including evaluating zoning amendments, special uses, appeals, and long-term planning goals. He introduced the hearing structure for the proposed Comprehensive General Plan and zoning ordinance. He then outlined the timeline for hearings, the chapters to be discussed at each session, and the final deliberation schedule on January 15, 2025. Procedural rules were emphasized, including testimony protocols and meeting recording practices, ensuring efficient and inclusive participation. Both items on the agenda will be talked about together.

Jeff Smith raised several procedural objections during the meeting, emphasizing concerns about public notice and process clarity. He argued that the zoning map amendment referenced new zoning categories not yet established, making the map discussion premature. He criticized the noticing process and questioned the timing, suggesting the zoning updates should follow an adopted comprehensive plan and urged deferring decisions until after the April election to ensure public trust and consensus-building.

Corporation Counsel, Alex Ruggie, responded that City Code outlines the procedures for map and text amendments and no postcard notice is required for text amendments. The mailed notice that was sent did include language referencing the text amendment.

Commissioner Halik responded to Jeff Smith's procedural objections by asking for clarification about whether it would be appropriate to make a motion to delay the vote on zoning amendments until the comprehensive plan is formally approved. He expressed a preference to hear all comments regarding the zoning and comprehensive plan during the meeting but noted that the commission would not be voting on anything until January.

Chair Rodgers acknowledged Commissioner Halik's point, emphasizing that the commission would not be voting on anything until January. He explained that the priority was to allow public testimony, especially since many individuals had taken the time to attend and speak. Chair Rodgers highlighted the importance of gathering input during these hearings and noted that any concerns or motions regarding the voting process could be addressed when the commission reconvenes to deliberate and vote in January.

Commissioner Halik expressed concern that proceeding with zoning discussions without an agreed-upon comprehensive plan creates a disjointed process. He emphasized that the comprehensive plan sets critical goals, which should guide zoning decisions. Halik highlighted that the commission had significant feedback on the plan that has not yet been addressed and argued that moving forward with zoning prematurely undermines the process.

Commissioner Halik proposed a motion to shift the focus after this meeting exclusively to finalizing and voting on the comprehensive plan before addressing zoning issues. He argued that proceeding with zoning discussions and decisions without first adopting the comprehensive plan is a backward process. Halik clarified that the motion is intended to ensure the comprehensive plan is prioritized as the foundation for zoning decisions. Chair Rodgers agreed.

Commissioner Halik made a motion that after this meeting, the Commission returns at the next meeting with a focus on the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Johnson seconded. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Mirintchev expressed support for Commissioner Halik's motion. He added that he had reviewed the proposed zoning amendments and identified potential improvements and discrepancies, but the effort required significant time. He then emphasized that the current schedule is inadequate to thoroughly and effectively evaluate zoning districts.

Commissioner Mangum agreed, emphasizing the need for a slower, more careful review of the documents. She cautioned against rushing, noting that once decisions are made, they are difficult to reverse. Mangum highlighted the importance of taking time to ensure the best outcomes for the community.

Planning Manager Liz Williams sought clarification regarding how the commission planned to proceed with the December 11th and 18th meetings. She suggested amending the motion to formally continue the hearings scheduled for those dates. She then emphasized that even with this decision, the commission might still need to meet on December 11th to make a procedural motion to continue those hearings, as required by legal protocol. There was conversation about moving future Land Use commission meetings.

Chair Rodgers stated that staff, Corporation Counsel, and the Chair would need to meet to develop a new calendar based on the vote's outcome. If the motion passes, they will plan how to proceed starting January 8th. If the motion fails, the commission will continue as originally scheduled. Rodgers affirmed that public testimony would still be heard and recorded at this meeting.

Commissioner Mabadi mentioned that some people expressed concern that the current pace of the process was driven by the fear that the incoming City Council might not prioritize the plan and zoning changes. He suggested that everyone involved should talk to Council candidates and stress the importance of continuing the work, regardless of election outcomes. He also inquired whether the delay to January 8th would provide additional time or just compress the timeline further, potentially increasing pressure in the new year.

Chair Rodgers clarified the motion, asking whether the commission would continue with the comprehensive plan and hold off further discussion on the zoning ordinance until January 8th, 2024. He emphasized that the motion concerns whether to prioritize the comprehensive plan before proceeding with any additional discussion on the zoning ordinance.

Chair Rodgers repeated the motion on the floor and a roll call vote was taken.
Ayes: Rodgers, Mirintchev, Arevalo, Johnson, Magnum, Mabadi
Nays: Puchtel
Abstain:
motion passed, 6-1.

Staff read the agenda items into the record. Liz Williams, Planning Manager, outlined the process of revising the zoning code in alignment with the city's comprehensive plan. She explained that zoning changes aim to better reflect Evanston's built environment and future vision. Zoning districts are categorized into residential, commercial, mixed-use, and specialized areas like institutional campuses and open space. She noted that the new zoning map reduces non-conforming lots, especially in residential areas. Staff is seeking feedback on the proposed changes, with a focus on what works, what needs adaptation, and what's missing from the proposal.

Chair Rodgers wanted to clarify if there was a mistake in one of the slides Liz presented or if it was a change in proposal. Liz Williams confirmed it was a typo.

Public Testimony

Karl Nystrom raised concerns about the proposed R4 zoning for 819 Judson, emphasizing its significant impact on neighborhood character and adjacent properties. They highlighted that the new zoning would allow larger buildings with reduced setbacks (3 feet on the sides, 10 feet in the front and rear), potentially leading to the loss of open spaces, trees, and natural landscaping. Additionally, concerns included reduced sunlight, increased density, traffic hazards, and environmental challenges. They viewed this zoning change as an excessive increase in density compared to current single-family zoning.

William Rice of 2400 Lincoln Drive critiqued the Envision Evanston plan, emphasizing concerns over its "transformational" changes. He highlighted potential affordability issues, with new multiplex development competing with families for properties, driving up prices, and reducing availability for lower-income households. He expressed skepticism about the plan's capacity to meet affordability goals, citing evidence from other cities like Minneapolis. Rice also warned that eliminating the "three unrelated rule" could disrupt neighborhoods near universities and increase rents. He argued that these changes lack a clear public mandate and risk undermining Evanston's character and affordability progress.

Robert Guritz of 736 Judson, a 41-year resident of his house, expressed concerns about the Envision Evanston plan. He described the process as overly broad and lacking the detailed consideration typical of zoning changes. Gurit emphasized his appreciation for the neighborhood's character, including its greenery and parks, and opposed the potential for developers to change its landscape. He expressed worry that developers would outbid residents for properties, altering the neighborhood’s dynamics, and stated a preference for maintaining the status quo.

Gul Agha, president of the Optima Views Condo Association and member of the Environment Board, emphasized the environmental concerns associated with tall buildings. He explained that taller structures, such as 20-story buildings, have significantly higher carbon footprints than shorter ones due to increased energy use, steel requirements, and inefficiencies in heating and cooling. He advocated for height restrictions, suggesting a limit of six to ten stories to balance density with sustainability. He also urged focusing development around transit hubs to reduce carbon emissions and improve livability.

Daniel Spiewack, a resident in an R1 zone, expressed strong support for revising R1 zoning to allow duplexes and triplexes. He stated he had no concerns about changes to neighborhood character and highlighted the importance of multi-unit housing for addressing issues like climate change and affordability. He emphasized that increasing housing supply through market-driven approaches is essential for lowering prices and ensuring affordability in Evanston. Speak concluded by affirming his satisfaction with this aspect of the proposed zoning changes.

John Kennedy of 1119 Hinman shared concerns about potential neighborhood impacts from zoning changes. He highlighted how diversity in Evanston contributes to a healthy community, but warned that allowing developers to buy out generational family homes could fundamentally alter neighborhoods. Kennedy opposed the prospect of higher-density developments, emphasizing that they conflict with the reasons many residents moved to the city. He called for

delaying any zoning decisions until after the April election to allow voters to address this significant issue through the electoral process.

Bruce Enenbach of 723 Emerson expressed strong opposition to the Envision Evanston 2040 plan. He criticized the proposal as being written from a developer's perspective rather than reflecting the desires of Evanston residents. Enenbach argued that the city's population has remained stable for 50 years, and there is no need for growth, increased density, or taller buildings. He emphasized that Evanston residents do not aspire to replicate Chicago's urban model and described the plan's foundational assumptions as flawed, advocating for its rejection.

Kyle Navins, of 1720 Maple Avenue, expressed concerns about the Envision Evanston plan, emphasizing that he and his family moved to Evanston to avoid living in a city like Chicago. He highlighted Evanston's unique identity and charm as a key reason for their decision to settle there. Evans cautioned against changes that might transform Evanston into "Chicago 2.0" and urged the council to take a slower, more deliberate approach to ensure the plan prioritizes the best interests of the community rather than developers.

John Metzer raised concerns about zoning changes near the intersection of Crawford and Gross Point in central Evanston, noting significant traffic challenges at this location. They criticized inconsistencies in rezoning, where the north side of Central Street remained unchanged while the south side faced alterations. They also questioned the city's goal for increasing moderate-income housing, specifically asking for current metrics on Section 8 and moderate-income housing in Evanston. The speaker emphasized the importance of setting clear goals before implementing zoning changes.

Jerri Garl of Environmental Justice Evanston emphasized the need for proactive corrective action to address long-term environmental injustices in under-resourced areas like the Fifth Ward. She criticized the waste transfer station near Church Street for its adverse impacts on nearby residents. Garl advocated for zoning reforms to mitigate environmental inequities, improve green spaces, and set limits on impervious surfaces. She also called for stronger anti-displacement measures in alignment with the City's strategic housing and anti-gentrification initiatives, like the "Here to Stay" program.

Sue Loellbach from Connections for the Homeless shared that the majority of the people they serve are from Evanston, with a significant portion being Black, low-income, and disabled. She highlighted the need for changes in the community, as people of color and lower-income residents are leaving, leading to a loss of diversity. She expressed support for the proposed zoning changes, as they could help address inequity and segregation, even though they wouldn't solve all the issues.

George Kripkin, a resident of the Seventh Ward, spoke about the character of Evanston, emphasizing its diversity and inclusion. He argued that as the city becomes more expensive, it must adapt to maintain a welcoming community. He expressed pride in Evanston's history of diversity and voiced concerns about rising costs pushing out long-time residents, particularly in the Fifth Ward. Krupkin advocated for changes that would preserve the city's character and support its diverse population, rather than making it unaffordable for current residents.

Mary Rosinski agreed with many previous comments and expressed concerns about the rushed timeline for updating Evanston’s zoning. She argued that a proper process, involving thoughtful public engagement and accurate drafts, should take two to three years, not a rushed deadline. They emphasized that increasing density alone won’t solve housing affordability and that market

forces alone have historically failed to lower housing costs. They called for more thoughtful planning, referencing various housing reports and stressing the need for careful implementation to avoid costly mistakes in the future.

Gail Kemp who lives on Judson in the 3rd Ward and mentioned she was fortunate to be able to purchase her own condo and be able to walk and use public transportation. What is needed is affordable housing for working families to be able to have a home and be able to work and use public transportation when needed. She mentioned the most odious use for zoning was the practice of redlining. We need to make sure that all of Evanston's residents have access to all of the things that Evanston has to offer. She stated we also need to understand what density really means and expressed that there has been a lot of fear mongering in the process. She expressed the need for reduction in parking requirements and more two, three and four unit homes.

Michael Aubrey, a resident near The Aux development at 2127 Washington, expressed concerns about whether zoning changes are in name only or include changes in use designation. He raised questions about how the new "Creation and Innovation Zone," formerly industrial, will impact adjacent neighborhoods, specifically regarding traffic, congestion, and parking. He highlighted that the development relies on an alley for access and worried about the potential compromise of existing traffic control measures, like cul-de-sacs, which currently protect the neighborhood's quality.

Alex Bond, a resident at 718 Judson, expressed frustration about parking issues near his home due to nearby rental properties. He mentioned difficulty finding parking after 10 PM, often resorting to parking several blocks away. Despite reaching out to local officials, his concerns about parking permits and restrictions have not been addressed.He then noted disparities in parking arrangements between single-family homes and multifamily properties in the area and requested assistance with resolving the issue.

Ray Friedman expressed concerns about the perceived rush to implement zoning changes and amend ordinances in Evanston. He criticized the lack of dialogue and response from officials during public meetings, including a recent listening session on the downtown plan. He questioned decisions such as shutting down affordable housing units on Wesley, allocating funds for certain projects, and promoting new developments without thorough resident involvement. Mr. Friedman urged for a slower, more transparent process supported by data and meaningful community engagement to ensure decisions align with resident priorities.

Elena Himmerich, a Northwestern environmental engineering student, proposed using the municipal building at 2221 Keeney for renewable energy generation to support Evanston's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP). Her suggestions included installing solar panels to power 35 homes annually, anaerobically digesting waste sludge from the O'Brien Water Reclamation Plant to produce biogas, and using combined heat and power systems. She also recommended pervious paving and rain gardens in the parking lot to reduce flooding and enhance biodiversity. She encouraged adaptability to overcome potential implementation challenges.

Joe Hill, a resident on Broadway, critiqued the current zoning plan, describing it as "not ready for prime time." He raised concerns about the lack of definitions for key concepts such as density and growth targets. Mr. Hill emphasized that a clear vision for Evanston's desired size and density is essential before adopting any plans. He argued that this plan, continuing the trend

from the Ryan Field project, risks altering Evanston's character and cautioned against rushing into significant zoning changes that could shape the city's future negatively.

Jonathan Seldin expressed support for the proposed zoning plan, emphasizing its potential to modernize Evanston and increase affordability through expanded housing supply. He advocated for expanding R3 zoning east of Chicago Avenue and broadening downtown development west of the train tracks to spur economic growth. Wright criticized resistance to the plan, suggesting it reflects a desire to preserve exclusivity and limit change. He underscored the need to embrace transformation to make Evanston accessible and affordable for future residents, challenging opposition rooted in maintaining the status quo.

Patrick O'Connor, a resident of 2753 Woodbine and a real estate developer with 27 years of experience, expressed strong opposition to the proposed zoning changes in Evanston. He argued that the changes would disproportionately benefit developers, leading to high-margin, expensive developments rather than affordable housing. He questioned the data and rationale behind the plan, highlighted concerns about investor ownership of residential properties, and criticized the rushed process without sufficient studies or assessments. O'Connor urged the city to prioritize residents and proceed with greater caution and deliberation.

Alan Turovitz, a Sixth Ward resident, raised concerns about proposed zoning changes, particularly in R1 residential areas. He acknowledged the goal of affordable housing and argued that increased density could strain infrastructure and worsen challenges like parking. He questioned the appropriateness of fourplexes in R1 zones and criticized the proposed 35-foot height limit, noting it would overshadow existing homes. Mr. Turovitz suggested revisiting height requirements and allowing more time to study the plan's impacts to balance development goals with maintaining neighborhood character.

Peter Kelly raised concerns about the city's process in presenting the proposed zoning changes. He criticized the lack of finalized documentation and urged the commission to ensure the city meets its obligations as an applicant. Mr. Kelly emphasized the need for more staff support and better data analysis, such as addressing discrepancies between housing units and households based on census data. He also highlighted issues with proposed height limits in downtown zoning, suggesting that alternatives to dense, tall buildings should be considered to balance growth across the city.

Dan Coyne, a Ninth Ward resident, spoke in favor of proposed zoning changes, highlighting their potential to increase housing stock, curb rising costs, and foster a diverse, vibrant community. Drawing on his roles as a social worker and affordable housing advocate, he emphasized the importance of mixed-use developments and increased property tax revenue to support local schools. Mr. Coyne acknowledged differing opinions and suggested dialogue to refine approaches to affordable housing. He advocated for change, citing its necessity for community sustainability and growth.

Trisha Connolly, speaking on behalf of the Community Alliance for Better Government (CABG), expressed concern about the lack of transparency in the Envision Evanston planning process. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that the city's zoning changes do not negatively affect low-income residents, people of color, and families. Ms. Connolly criticized the city's approach, advocating for slower, more inclusive decision-making to ensure the voices of underserved communities are heard before implementing significant changes. She called for the prioritization of the community's timetable over the elected officials' schedule.

Carlis Sutton, a resident of 1821 Darrow Avenue for 74 years, criticized the commission for approving developments in his neighborhood that he believes have harmed the community. He highlighted parking issues after several homes were replaced with multi-unit buildings, which has created problems due to underused garages. Sutton also expressed frustration with the lack of community engagement in the decision-making process and called for more localized meetings. He questioned the impact of proposed zoning changes on minority access to capital and alignment with community goals.

Paul Breslin, a retired professor and longtime Evanston resident, expressed concerns about the proposed zoning changes, stating that he would support them if they were proven to help disadvantaged populations. He criticized the process for being rushed, referencing previous instances where citizens were not adequately consulted. He also pointed out gaps in transportation planning, particularly a lack of bus services in areas with disadvantaged populations. Mr. Breslin urged more careful consideration and problem-solving rather than relying on generalities.

Jeff Boarini, a resident of 1800 Ridge, emphasized the importance of understanding unintended consequences when implementing major changes like zoning revisions. He pointed out that the rush to deregulate zoning in Evanston could lead to unforeseen negative outcomes. Boarini urged the city to slow down the process, conduct thorough impact assessments, and consider multiple scenarios before proceeding. He stressed the need for caution and flexibility in managing such a significant change.

Darlene Cannon, a Second Ward resident, criticized the zoning plan, arguing that without a land trust, affordable housing will not remain affordable long-term. She expressed concerns about the lack of resident participation, with less than 6% involved in the process. She then emphasized the burden of irresponsible actions on low and middle-income residents, particularly Black residents, and questioned the city's neglect of maintenance, referencing the Wesley buildings. She called for better systems to prevent displacement and ensure long-term support for the community.

Nancy Little, a long-time resident of Evanston, expressed concern over the city's zoning plan. She argued that the proposal lacked clear goals and sufficient public understanding. Little emphasized the need for more detailed communication with the community about zoning changes, rather than relying on complicated plans shown on a screen. She stressed that voters should be fully informed to ensure the plan supports diversity and the overall well-being of the city. Little called for improvements to Evanston while preserving its positive attributes.

Owen Wilson Thomas, a Ninth Ward resident, addressed concerns about increased density and its potential impact on property values. He cited studies showing that density can actually increase single-family home values and improve city finances by reducing the costs of services for spread-out single-family homes. He also countered claims about the environmental impact of tall buildings, arguing that higher density options, such as multi-story buildings, are more sustainable and have a lower carbon footprint per unit than single-family homes. He supported the city's proposed zoning changes as an important step toward addressing housing shortages.

Jim Slingo, a Third Ward resident, expressed concerns about zoning changes and their impact on local businesses. He highlighted the importance of maintaining industrial properties, citing examples of businesses like Ward Manufacturing that contribute to local taxes and jobs. Slingo also raised issues about affordability and the risk of gentrification, stressing the need for zoning regulations to keep housing diverse and accessible. He advocated for thoughtful,

environmentally-friendly development, including solar energy and electric heat, and urged the city to avoid rushing the zoning process.

Brian Hansen, a 24-year resident of Normandy Place, expressed strong support for the proposed zoning changes, including ending single-family zoning and allowing for more housing diversity. He emphasized that keeping the status quo would exacerbate the affordability crisis and lead to a less diverse, wealthier, and older community. Hansen argued that the choice facing Evanston is not about maintaining buildings, but about preserving community diversity. He believes that zoning changes are essential for ensuring Evanston remains a socioeconomically, racially, and generationally diverse place to live.

Commissioner Questions/Discussion

Commissioner Halik sought clarification about parking requirements in the R1, R2, and R3 zones, noting that parking is listed in Chapter 5, which seems separate from the ongoing zoning discussions.Liz Williams clarified that under the proposed zoning changes, there will be no minimum parking requirements. New developments must consider transportation demand, and if the demand plan indicates the need for parking, the development will be required to provide it. Staff will review these plans, and there are established criteria for evaluating them.

Commissioner Halik expressed support for higher-density buildings but emphasized the importance of location. He suggested that higher density should be focused on specific areas, such as corridors and centers like Central Street and Emerson, rather than being applied broadly across the city. He voiced concern that the plan's broad approach felt like "no zoning," preferring a more selective strategy for where density is allowed, aligned with the city's comprehensive plan.

Commissioner Mabadi raised concerns about the proposed zoning changes, particularly the lack of a minimum lot size requirement for R1 properties. He argued that reducing square footage and increasing unit count could disrupt the harmony of existing neighborhoods, negatively affecting property values. Mabadi emphasized that affordability and density should be treated separately, suggesting that changes to zoning alone wouldn't make housing affordable due to high construction costs. He advocated for focusing on existing spaces, like basement apartments, to add more affordable units. He also expressed unease about increasing density in current R1 areas.

Chair Rodgers asked for clarification regarding the number of properties in the R1, R2, and R3 areas that fall within the 6,000–7,000 square foot range. He wanted to know how many properties in these zoning districts could potentially accommodate additional units if the minimum lot size requirement were increased. This inquiry was aimed at understanding the scale of potential changes before proceeding with zoning modifications.

Commissioner Mabadi suggested creating separate zoning categories for three- and four-unit buildings, proposing that R1 could accommodate one- and two-unit structures, while R2 could be designated for three- and four-unit buildings. He also recommended placing buildings with more than four units in a separate zoning category, as there are already areas in the code that accommodate higher-density developments.

Commissioner Puchtel expressed support for the proposals, noting that his own block in the 8th Ward includes a mix of single-family homes, three-flats, and apartment buildings, and he sees this mixture as positive. He disagreed with the idea of limiting zoning reforms to specific parts of

the city, stating that progressive zoning should apply citywide. He also clarified that the plan is not about formal "affordable housing," but rather about creating a variety of housing types that naturally generate different price points for residents.

Commissioner Mirintchev asked staff if an independent consultant had reviewed the proposed urban planning and comprehensive plan, as it is common in significant planning processes for an outside expert to provide a report. Liz Williams clarified Commissioner Mirintchev's suggestion, asking if he meant a secondary audit beyond the consultant team already hired to prepare the report. Commissioner Mirintchev confirmed, noting the potential value of an independent review. Liz acknowledged that this had not been considered and mentioned potential cost implications.

Commissioner Mirintchev emphasized the need for deeper understanding and modeling of how proposed zoning changes would physically affect properties and neighborhoods. He expressed concerns about potential negative impacts, such as disproportionately long buildings, increased building height allowances for sloped roofs, and incoherent architectural outcomes. He suggested reviewing the new zoning standards with side-by-side comparisons to current regulations and incorporating scenario modeling for various lot sizes and layouts. This would ensure that changes are thoroughly evaluated to avoid unintended consequences in residential districts.

Commissioner Halik supported Commissioner Mirintchev's suggestion for modeling potential physical impacts of the proposed zoning changes. He emphasized the importance of understanding how zoning parameters translate into physical structures, particularly in residential areas. He highlighted concerns about differences in building types, such as flat-roofed versus pitched-roof buildings, and the implications of as-of-right zoning, which would allow developments without further review. He stressed the need for a detailed zoning analysis to anticipate and address potential design and compatibility issues.

Commissioner Johnson asked for clarification regarding two maps included in the 12.4.2024 memo for Land Use. He noted a proposed zoning map on page 10 and another on page 14, labeled with a draft date of 11.19.2024, and questioned if they were different. Liz Williams clarified that the maps are identical, with one included in the memo body and the other as an attachment. She acknowledged the presentation may have caused confusion and apologized for any misunderstanding.

Commissioner Johnson raised concerns about potential impacts of the proposed zoning changes, particularly allowing up to four units in R1 zones. He emphasized preserving historic character, managing impervious surfaces, and maintaining a diversity of housing types. Liz Williams clarified that historic districts are regulated by the preservation ordinance which is not being contemplated for changes. Johnson noted the appeal of existing single-family homes and expressed worries about developers converting smaller houses into multi-unit buildings. He questioned how the plan interacts with the city's accessory dwelling unit (ADU) provisions and advocated for maintaining R1 restrictions while supporting density increases in areas with appropriate infrastructure.

Liz Williams clarified that ADU provisions in the proposed zoning updates would largely remain consistent with current regulations, with a potential slight increase in allowable ADU size. She indicated that detailed regulations on ADUs would be available soon, subject to the timeline and hearing decisions. This aligns with maintaining flexibility for accessory units while balancing increased density proposals.

Liz Williams clarified details about impervious surface and building lot coverage changes in the proposed zoning updates:

- For the proposed **R1 District**:
  - **Impervious surface coverage** remains at **45%**, the same as current R1 zoning.
  - **Building lot coverage** increases slightly from **30% to 35%**.
- For the proposed **R2 areas merged into R1**:
  - **Impervious surface coverage** decreases from **55% to 45%**.
  - **Building lot coverage** decreases from **40% to 35%**.

This addresses misconceptions that impervious surface coverage was increasing in all areas under the proposed changes.

Commissioner Mangum suggested having comparison charts showing current zoning alongside proposed changes for better clarity when addressing public questions. She expressed concern about the potential for uneven impacts across wards, particularly in areas like the Fifth Ward where land is more affordable, potentially making it a target for developers over other neighborhoods. Mangum supported exploring options like increasing lot size requirements and considering limitations on where changes could occur to reduce negative effects and promote equitable development across the city.

Commissioner Mabadi asked about the rationale behind reducing the minimum lot size in the proposed R1 district from 7,200 square feet to 6,500 square feet, questioning whether the change was based on specific reasoning or if it was an arbitrary decision.

Liz Williams explained that the reduction of the minimum lot size in the proposed R1 district from 7,200 to 6,500 square feet aims to align with the existing lot sizes in the area. Nearly 49% of the current lots are smaller than the existing minimum lot size, and the change seeks to reduce the number of variances required. This adjustment is meant to reflect the existing built environment while preventing lots from becoming too small, which could lead to more significant changes in the neighborhood's character.

Commissioner Mabadi is raising concerns about the proposed 6,500 square foot lot size for the R1 district. He suggests that the typical 35-foot wide lot might require deeper lot sizes to meet the minimum square footage. He questions whether a smaller minimum lot size, like 5,000 square feet, might be sufficient to meet the zoning requirements without having to adjust setbacks or lot dimensions excessively.

Commissioner Mabadi clarifies that while he understands the zoning balancing act, he's advocating for simplifying the process. He argues that setbacks and lot coverage already limit the size of houses on smaller lots, and with appropriate setbacks, smaller lots could still accommodate development. He suggests that adjusting lot sizes could make land more available for development without requiring lengthy approval processes, ultimately aiming for expediency and easier navigation of zoning regulations.

Senior Housing Planner Uri Pachter provided a follow-up regarding the proposed 6,500 square foot lot size for R1 districts. He explained that about 40% of parcels would fall below this size, and if the lot size were adjusted back to 7,200 square feet, about 50% would be smaller, which would result in roughly 700 parcels in that category. This suggests that changing the lot size would not significantly alter the current distribution of lot sizes in the district.

Senior Planner Sam Hubbard clarified that the proposed reduction in lot size for R1 districts to 6,500 square feet is aimed at bringing more parcels into conformity with the zoning standards. He added that while lot size conformity is important, setbacks also play a significant role in limiting development potential. Staff plans to further model and analyze how many parcels could realistically accommodate the proposed density based on these factors, which would give a clearer picture of the impact. This approach would help assess how many parcels could actually accommodate four units.

Chair Rodgers emphasized the importance of balancing zoning changes, particularly in regard to minimum lot sizes and industrial areas. He raised concerns about reducing the minimum lot size too much, as this could lead to subdividing large lots into multiple smaller parcels, potentially increasing density and altering the character of neighborhoods. He also discussed the need to carefully consider the creation of Innovation Districts, questioning whether removing industrial areas entirely would limit future opportunities for light industry and related developments, and suggested reserving some industrial land for such uses.

Liz Williams explained that the "Creation and Innovation" district is more about rebranding traditional industrial zones to reflect evolving industries, rather than eliminating current industrial uses. The goal is to make the area adaptable to emerging industries over the next two decades, supporting whatever new businesses may want to locate in Evanston. The use table will clarify the types of permissible uses in this district.

Chair Rodgers raised a question regarding the institutional district and why the different uses are placed into the same category. Liz Williams responded that it is more so that these types of uses have long term master plans where they are thinking about future development and adapting to future trends. There are similar needs for some uses such as senior living and hospital living needs that align. These types of uses are also developed as campuses.

Chair Rodgers then inquired about the rationale behind subdividing the university districts, which make up 1% of the city's property, while housing which makes up about 95% of properties, is grouped into larger categories. This suggests a focus on the strategy for zoning university areas versus residential and mixed-use zones, which cover a larger portion of Evanston's properties. He is seeking clarity on why there is such a distinction in approach.

Liz Williams explained that the subdivision of university districts is largely due to the geography and transitions between the university and adjacent districts. A uniform zoning approach wouldn't be appropriate, especially for areas like the athletic campus. The current zoning structure aims to be sensitive to the university’s interaction with surrounding residential neighborhoods, with more prescriptive standards in place to address potential conflicts in land use. This approach reflects the city's existing zoning strategy for the university areas.

Chair Rodgers inquired about the lack of building height requirements in the proposed D3 district. Liz Williams explained that the lack of a specific building height limit in the D3 district is intended to provide flexibility. The height is regulated by the FAR requirement, meaning developers can build up to the allowed FAR. However, if a project exceeds a certain height, it triggers a planned development review, where the Land Use Commission and City Council must approve the project. This approach is designed to allow for taller buildings while ensuring that development remains aligned with the city's goals and oversight.

Chair Rodgers asked if the 4,500 square feet standard is common across most business districts, particularly in mixed-use areas with storefronts and residential spaces above. That analysis needs to be done to clarify the standard.

Liz Williams explained the use of the FAR approach in the residential districts. The FAR approach accommodates the variety in existing building types within these zones. This transition reflects an effort to allow more flexibility in how properties are developed, ensuring that the range of existing development styles can be maintained and adapted to new projects.

Chair Rodgers expresses concerns about the potential impact of zoning changes in the R4 district, where residential properties are moving towards higher density allowances. He worries that these changes, including increasing building height and reducing setbacks, might disrupt the character of neighborhoods with smaller streets and buildings, particularly areas with older, smaller-scale residential buildings like Chicago Courtyards. He also raises concerns about the vulnerability of lower-income areas to redevelopment pressures. He emphasized the need for more detailed information, especially in Chapter 5, to better understand landscaping and other requirements before making final decisions.

Commissioner Mabadi raised concerns about the absence of a minimum lot width requirement in the proposed R4 zoning. He highlighted adjustments made to minimum lot widths, such as increasing from 50 to 60 feet, to accommodate practical needs like underground parking and turning radii. He questions whether eliminating the lot width requirement could lead to issues, particularly if parking requirements remain unchanged, and suggests that consistent zoning standards need to address these concerns to prevent similar problems.

Liz Williams clarified the rationale for presenting the zoning updates in smaller, sequential sections. The approach aims to help the Land Use Commission focus on specific parts of the ordinance without being overwhelmed by interconnected elements. While acknowledging the commission's capacity to multitask and discuss multiple issues simultaneously, she emphasized that this phased strategy allows for more structured feedback. She reassured the commission that they would revisit the ordinance as a unified piece in a subsequent meeting before making final recommendations. She then thanked the Commission for their discussion and feedback.

III. COMMUNICATIONS

The Land Use Commission meeting concluded with discussions on procedural adjustments for the zoning ordinance and comp plan updates, including scheduling the comp plan review for January 8, 2025, with a vote planned for January 15, 2025.

Commissioner Halik made a motion to continue public testimony on the zoning text and map amendment to the January 22, 2025 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Puchtel. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed, 7-0.

Commissioner Halik made a motion to cancel the meetings previously scheduled for December 11, 2025 and December 18, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Puchtel. A roll vote was taken and the motion passed, 7-0.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

One person submitted written comments for review.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Puchtel moved to adjourn the meeting
Commissioner Mangum seconded

Meeting Adjourned at 9:56 pm

The next Evanston Land Use Commission meeting will be held **on Wednesday, January 8th, 2025 , at 6:00 pm,** in the James C. Lytle Council Chambers in the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Justin Bock, Administrative lead

Reviewed by
Meagan Jones, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner