



**MEETING MINUTES**

**LAND USE COMMISSION**

Wednesday, March 12th, 2025

6:00 PM

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle City Council Chambers

Members Present: Loren Berlin, Kiril Mirintchev, Chair Jeanne Lindwall, Darush Mabadi, Brian Johnson, Jameika Mangum, George Halik, Myrna Arevalo

Members Absent: Max Puchtel

Staff Present: Neighborhood Land Use Planner Meagan Jones, Planning and policy Supervisor Erin Baynes, Planning Manager Liz Williams, Policy Coordinator Alison Leipsiger Community Development Director Sarah Flax

Presiding Member: Jeanne Lindwall

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**I. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM**

Chair Lindwall opened the meeting at 6:07pm and a quorum was established

**II. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Public Hearing | Comprehensive Plan - Envision Evanston 2045**

The City of Evanston is proposing a new Comprehensive General Plan to guide development for the next 20 years. The draft plan includes a vision statement, goals, policies and actions related to the environment; land use; transportation; housing; economic development; placemaking, arts and culture; parks and open space; and preservation.

Public Testimony

Melissa Appelt expressed support for the plan overall, especially the housing chapter and 5-year review cycle. She requested more data/statistics to support the need for more density.

Paul Breslin agreed with the need for additional data. He questioned the process behind the RFP and suggested slowing down the timeline.

Betty Bog (Connections for the Homeless) advocated for removing zoning barriers and expanding housing programs. She stated that she wants stronger language to reflect the urgency of housing needs.

Jeff Smith explained that he reviewed the draft plan and called it a "workable shell". He then criticized its assumption that density leads to affordability. Recounted a panel that he led where gentrification was a major topic.

Jean Combs, 1212 Elmwood, stated she has seen a lot of changes in Evanston over the years including the decrease of the Black population and increase of retirement age. She added that change is happening if the plan is approved or not and the proposed plan gives some hope of correcting trends and she supports measures to create a variety of housing.

Kristine Lovequist, 6th Ward, noted a wage/housing cost mismatch leading to many being cost burdened. She expressed support for the plan ideas which offer alternatives.

Terri Dubin, former Plan Commissioner, expressed support of the plan for clearer zoning regulations and housing variety. She called current zoning convoluted due to ad hoc changes and stated the new draft incorporates the work of both staff and other boards, committees and commissions.

Mike Johnson, 1321 Elmwood, Opposes new construction. He sees increased taxes, overcrowding, and sustainability as concerns. He stated that he does not think building anything new is sustainable, maintaining what we have is.

Andrea Liss, 3rd Ward, stated that upzoning is rash and will harm Evanston. She expressed concern about outside influence and rushing the process. She added that more density does not equal more affordability.

Dave Galloway, 728 Noyes, seconded Jack Weiss's written comments and advocated for the establishment of an Urban Design Commission (UDC). He expressed that a successful aspect of this process is the Land Use Commission. He mentioned the disparity between wages and cost of living and emphasized that an element of urban design that permeates every chapter is walkability and should be referenced more in all of the chapters.

Steve Test, 1135 Hinman, called the process "botched" and says the push for upzoning is not supported by the public, citing a low survey response rate. He expressed that it's possible to craft a moderate, sensible plan that can bring a consensus

Sonia Cohen, 7th Ward, thanked the Commission for its work and stated that the variety of housing types and incomes in her neighborhood would be lost if the proposed zoning went forward. She cited the loss of 2–4 unit buildings and rise in 50+ unit ones, which tend to be less affordable.

Kiera Kelly stated that it appears that Envision Evanston was predetermined by ZoneCo, Connections for the Homeless, and the Mayor and expressed that public input has not been properly reflected in the draft plan.

Michelle Chlebek, 1st Ward, emphasized the need for housing for the aging population and advocated for a data-driven and realistic development strategy. She stated that there is a risk of achieving opposite of stated goals without it. She emphasized the need to be strategic about where to focus development.

Jim McKee, 3rd Ward, expressed support for strategic, not blanket, density. He warned that developers will not build for workers like teachers or nurses and will maximize what can be developed and likely lead to gentrification.

Lee Greenberg, 2207 Orrington, questioned population growth assumptions but expressed support for targeted density downtown and along transit corridors. He suggested emphasis on adaptive reuse and allowing ADUs in every neighborhood.

Robert Keding of Evanston Transit Alliance, shared support of TOD, complete networks, stating infrastructure policies will help. He added that it is critical to ID funding sources to assist in changes/updates and encouraged specific language for additional CTA stations in Evanston, requirements for more bike parking and more lighting for pedestrians.

Jenny Washburn stated her support of affordable housing but that she wants clear direction and quality over speed for the Envision Evanston process. She mentioned that, given the current vacancy rate, affordable housing could be directed to those available units.

Jack Weiss, Design Evanston, recommended consistency in presentation across the chapters and stated that every chapter should include a vision and summary bullets. He emphasized support for the Urban Design Commission and infrastructure improvements. He also encouraged adding a CTA station and pedestrian enhancements.

Commissioner Halik asked clarifying questions on the difference between UDC and SPAARC or DAPR and if UDC would speak directly to Land Use Commission, Planning & Development Committee, and City Council

John Storey Williamson, 3rd Ward, expressed opposition to the plan, stating that it does not represent his ideals as a home owner nor does it provide evidence that increased density leads to more affordable housing. He believes Evanston already has housing diversity and doubts density will bring affordability.

Jane McCarthy, 3rd Ward, stated that housing is one of Evanston's greatest assets and that the plan should focus on helping residents maintain homes and preserve existing stock.

Sue Gregor, 2nd Ward, expressed concern about speed and transparency of the Envision Evanston process and that she distrusts affordability promises.

### Commissioner discussion

Commissioner Berlin began by expressing hope that people do not feel bad for having differing opinions, adding that the housing market is a buyer's market, and when that framework is applied to the rental market, the density argument has more weight. Commissioners Halik and Berlin explored how that interpretation works in Evanston, given the current levels of density that already exist.

Commissioner Mabadi reflected that everyone present is engaged because they hold Evanston in high regard. He pointed out that high demand for living in Evanston contributes to housing costs, and that this desirability is a key part of the equation that needs to be balanced.

Commissioner Halik noted a concern that the plan felt like an “off-the-shelf” product and didn't seem tailored to Evanston's neighborhood-level needs. He emphasized that the city should focus on doing fewer things better rather than trying to do everything at once.

Chair Lindwall responded by saying the plan is meant to provide broad guidance, not intersection-level detail. More specific neighborhood-by-neighborhood planning would come during the zoning phase. Commissioner Johnson added that affordability is also affected by the demand for housing types and prevailing wages. He noted that northshore high-paying jobs attract people who can afford higher housing prices, reinforcing that many of these forces are regional in nature, not just local.

*The Commission reviewed the comp plan by chapters*

During review of Chapter 1, commissioners pointed out that paragraph four makes a list of key issues that should align with the chapter titles and include page references. Chair Lindwall recommended changing the term “housing crisis” to “financial meltdown.” Commissioner Mirintchev stressed the need for a consistent structure and naming convention across chapters and recommended a shorter format with stronger statements. He also mentioned the lakefront as one of Evanston's most valuable features and suggested it be emphasized more in the Parks & Places chapter.

Commissioner Mabadi raised concern that the plan does not reference enough local enterprise and felt the introduction undersold Evanston's complexity. Commissioner Halik suggested replacing the word “growth” with “future” and called for better definition of terms like “needs” and “racial equity.”

Chair Lindwall emphasized the need for clearly stated objectives at the beginning of each chapter, presented graphically if possible.

Commissioner Johnson proposed rewording the opening sentence to reflect that the document is a general vision grounded in community values. Commissioner Mabadi asked whether the plan should acknowledge its flexibility, and Chair Lindwall agreed this was a key distinction between strategic and comprehensive planning.

Commissioner Berlin raised concerns about using the word “consensus,” given the wide range of opinions. This led to broader discussion about transparency and the importance of accurately representing divergent views.

In reviewing Chapter 2, Commissioner Johnson questioned the structure and suggested presenting general themes under a heading like “What We Heard,” followed by a description of how the data was collected. He noted that many people began engaging only after the draft was released and that feedback since then should be incorporated.

Commissioner Halik pointed out that no raw data has been provided from the community engagement that occurred before the draft was released.

Chair Lindwall commented that the chapter feels disjointed, starting with early processes, skipping over months of work, and then jumping to the current plan. She appreciated the engagement presented in the Neighborhoods & Places chapter but thought this chapter misrepresented the process.

Commissioner Mirintchev suggested a more compact presentation, with summaries and possibly a table listing all community meetings and their topics. He proposed that this could be added as an appendix.

Commissioner Halik emphasized that this chapter is important, noting that people who attended engagement events feel strongly about what was discussed. He expressed concern that no one in those sessions asked for upzoning, yet that's not reflected in the draft. Chair Lindwall acknowledged that differing opinions should be recognized.

Commissioner Berlin agreed but felt that voices critical of the plan have been heard and represented.

Commissioner Mabadi pointed out the lack of a zoning chapter despite receiving many zoning-related comments, and recommended adding a section summarizing what was heard on zoning. Johnson asked if any demographic breakdown of the survey responses—such as income—was available. Staff confirmed there wasn't, and Johnson recommended at least providing context about over- and underrepresented populations among respondents.

Commissioner Halik noted that the vision statement lacked references to preserving the distinct character of neighborhoods and maintaining the city's financial stability, the latter of which Chair Lindwall agreed was becoming a consistent concern.

For Chapter 3, Chair Lindwall recommended including historical context such as the 1917 Comprehensive Plan and the 1920s adoption of zoning. She also called for more long-term data showing housing trends, household size, racial distribution, and the number of units by building type.

Commissioner Berlin asked whether data on car ownership trends could be expanded further back in time to show directional change. Commissioner Halik supported the idea and referenced using ACS data.

Commissioner Johnson noted that the current section reads more like a data dump, and that goals should be reserved for later chapters, not "Who We Are Today." Chair Lindwall agreed, saying some of that information may be more appropriate in Chapter 4. She added that metrics should be clearly defined and not subject to multiple interpretations. Mentioning the city's two hospitals was also recommended.

Commissioner Mabadi stated Evanston's many multigenerational families should be acknowledged, as that significantly impacts housing needs. Berlin highlighted that metrics like average household size, home price, rent, housing cost burden, and income growth over time should all be included.

Commissioner Halik agreed and added that a section on the evolution of retail should be incorporated.

Commissioner Arevalo asked whether the city had retail data, including for women-owned businesses, and emphasized the need to identify what types of retail are missing or could be supported. Chair Lindwall said the plan should clearly indicate which trends are national and how they apply locally. Commissioner Mirintchev commented that the current "key metrics" section seems disconnected from the rest of the chapter and suggested a more logical sequence of ideas.

Commissioner Johnson added that the text opens by casting doubt on its own data, which undermines the chapter. Instead, it should state that the data comes from reliable sources and explain why certain figures may be over- or underrepresented. He also called for more consistent formatting across subsections. He recommended including a subheading dedicated to Northwestern University population demographics. Mangum noted that these demographics change frequently and may not be too heavily emphasized, but Johnson felt at least some general data should be presented.

Commissioner Arevalo asked if it was possible to track how many Northwestern University students stay in Evanston post-graduation, which Commissioner Johnson said could demonstrate the university's broader impact.

Commissioner Halik again noted confusion about the relevance of national trends presented in the "trends" column.

In Chapter 4, some felt the vision statement did not need to be repeated here—or that it might be better placed here instead of in Chapter 2.

Commissioner Halik suggested removing "minority-owned" from references to businesses in the plan's language.

Commissioner Mabadi brought up concerns about displacing existing land uses and stressed that some auto-related businesses may still be viable and contribute to city revenue. Commissioner Halik emphasized the need to balance expenses with revenues. Discussion followed on innovation, creation, and land use approaches.

Chair Lindwall noted the chapter should include an analysis of development sites, with clear references to mixed-use centers and corridors. There was discussion around how corridors should be mapped or explained more clearly. The Future Land Use Map, currently placed in Chapter 4, may be better suited within Chapter 5.

**Commissioner Johnson motioned to continue the hearing to the March 19, 2025 Commission meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Mangum. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed, 8-0.**

**Ayes:** Chair Lindwall, Commissioner Halik, Commissioner Mirintchev, Commissioner Arevalo, Commissioner Mabadi, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Mangum, Commissioner Berlin

**Nayes:**

**Absent:** Commissioner Puchtel

Commissioner Halik closed by announcing that his first term on the commission is ending, and he has applied for reappointment. His last meeting may be next week.

### III. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

### IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Johnson Moved to adjourn the meeting  
Commissioner Berlin Seconded**

**Ayes:** Chair Lindwall, Commissioner Halik, Commissioner Mirintchev, Commissioner Arevalo, Commissioner Mabadi, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Mangum, Commissioner Berlin

**Nayes:**

**Absent:** Commissioner Puchtel

**Meeting adjourned at 10:18 pm**

The next Evanston Land Use Commission meeting is scheduled to be held **on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at 7:00 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