



**MEETING MINUTES**

**LAND USE COMMISSION**

Wednesday, March 19th, 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, Jameika Mangum, Max Puchtel, George Halik

Members Absent: Myrna Arevalo and Brian Johnson

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

Presiding Member: Jeanne Lindwall

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

Chair Lindwall called the meeting to order at 6:00pm  
Neighborhood Land Use Planner Meagan Jones called the roll and a quorum was met

**II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: October 9, 2024 (amended), October 16, 2024 (amended), and November 13, 2024**

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: October 9, 2024 (amended)**

**Motion:** Halik  
**Second:** Puchtel  
**Motion Passed 5-0-2**

**Ayes:**Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Puchtel, Halik

**Nayes:**

**Abstain:** Berlin, Mirintchev

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: October 16, 2024(amended)**

**Motion:** Halik  
**Second:** Puchtel  
**Motion Passed 5-0-2**

**Ayes:** Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Puchtel, Halik

**Nayes:**

**Abstain:** Berlin, Lindwall

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: November 13, 2024(amended)**

**Motion: Halik**

**Second: Puchtel**

**Motion Passed 5-0-2**

**Ayes:**Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Halik

**Nayes:**

**Abstain:**Berlin, Puchtel

**III. 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. **Note: The Commission is expected to close in-person testimony for this hearing but will accept written comment until April 4, 2025.**

Commissioner Halik expressed concern about the April 4th deadline, saying it is unfair to the public—especially if the Commission does not get through all the chapters by then. He echoed Michelle Chlebek and Jeff Smith’s points about the process. He also noted it’s been a pleasure working with the Commission (in case it is his last meeting) and thanked the public for all their input.

Public Testimony

Frank Hill – Thanked Lindwal for clarifying the process and apologized for public treatment of Commissioner Berlin. He then urged listening to understand, not just to respond.

Mary Rosinski – Criticized the process and asked why Teska was not used as originally planned, She questioned HDR and ZoneCo's involvement and called to restart the process.

Michelle Chlebek – Mentioned that she reviewed the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and liked various elements of it, wanting some aspects carried into the new plan.

John Williamson – Called the draft plan idealistic, not practical and noted imbalance in comments supporting renters/density. He expressed that the “missing middle” focus misses the real need: more single-family homes, especially for Black and Latino families.

Alf McConnell – Developer; said Biss is misinformed or misleading; upzoning won't create affordability; Evanston already has low SFH rate; tax claims incorrect.

Dominic Voz – Supports zoning reform and anti-displacement; cited studies backing missing middle; called for stronger language on preventing displacement.

Sue Loellbach – Noted that zoning is just one tool to use towards creating affordable housing and referred to Connections for the Homeless' study that showed zoning issues. She stated that many communities reach similar conclusions.

Jen Foyer Crystal – From Connections; emphasized programs that prevent renter displacement and support tenants.

John Kennedy – 3rd Ward, stated that residents never asked for more density and opposed the possibility of 100 ft tall buildings on Chicago Ave. He then expressed support for a design committee.

Karl Klein – Representing the Preservation Commission, said that the Preservation Commission will submit in-line edits by the April 4th deadline.

Jeff Smith – Said local expertise regarding the plan has been ignored and that the process should have been led by the Land Use Commission; zoning is not the villain.

Liz Bryant – Advocated for zoning reform and housing programs (e.g. land trusts) and said zoning changes make such efforts possible.

Steve Test – Urged a parcel-by-parcel upzoning approach and proposed a public redevelopment parcel list that could then be reviewed by the Land Use Commission. He then expressed worry that a revised draft would not come to the Commission.

Gail Kemp – 3rd Ward, discussed displacement risk for renters and people of color and called for balanced protections and more anti-displacement measures within the draft plan.

Susan Hammer – with Connections for the Homeless, stated she once owned, now rents in Evanston but will have to move to Skokie. She expressed support for the goal of protecting naturally occurring affordable housing and providing subsidized housing. She also supported zoning-related policies proposed.

Cory King – 2nd Ward, stressed the need for more affordable housing in Evanston, noting that economies of scale matter. He emphasized that zoning changes are one piece of a bigger effort.

Hugo Rodriguez – Former HCDC member, criticized City inaction on the Wesley apartments and emphasized the need for infrastructure planning. He also expressed agreement that the draft plan should return to the Land Use Commission.

Patrick O'Connor – Argued density push contradicts community sentiment; said Evanston already dense and more dense per square mile than many places used as a comparison. He then emphasized obtaining more data showing the need for additional housing in Evanston.

Terry Edlin – Advocated for home-sharing to reduce isolation and food insecurity. She suggested offering classes on coliving and offering a certificate for people to be put into a pool of people who could be possible co-living candidates.

Paul Breslin – Echoed concerns about process brought up by Ms. Rosinski, mentioning having compared HDR and Teska proposals.. He then asked Commissioner Mangum for clarification about her previous comments on displacement risks;

Andrea Liss – 3rd Ward, voiced disagreement on proposed density recommendations. She expressed concern about design standards, citing a bad design example on Sheridan Square.

Linda Dameshek – 3rd Ward, stated she was overwhelmed by the draft plan and wanted additional time for review and public discussion. She criticized the vagueness of past input sessions.

Luke Harris-Ferree – Pastor, noted privilege in some anti-density comments and urged moving forward instead of delaying further.

Joe Caprile – stated not reissuing a revised draft is a mistake and he wanted confirmation that public feedback is being acknowledged.

#### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Lindwall explained the need for the City Council to weigh in and allow time to synthesize public and Commissioner comments. She believes the current draft incorporates much of the earlier feedback and stressed the need to start crystalizing policy recommendations. She then noted that the budget for a version 2.0 of the plan is exhausted, so it is important to identify key changes moving forward.

Commissioner Halik raised concerns that this process feels similar to the earlier misstep of trying to develop the plan and zoning code at the same time. He questioned the trust in future drafts reflecting public feedback when the "What We Heard" summary did not appear to. He expressed a desire to see a clear gathering and presentation of comments by staff.

Commissioner Puchtel expressed support for moving forward with the process, saying enough meetings have been held, and additional meetings will likely just repeat the same arguments. He rejected claims that the public had not had enough opportunity to weigh in and suggested that focus should now shift to concrete policy proposals.

Commissioner Mirintchev asked about the voting process and what happens if the Commission votes “no”. Chair Lindwall explained the Commission will be voting on specific proposed changes to the draft, which will then be forwarded with their recommendation to Council. Commissioner Mirintchev agreed with Commissioner Halik that a more polished draft should be sent to Council rather than one full of suggested changes.

Commissioner Mabadi cautioned that a new Council may be in place soon and sending a chaotic, redlined draft could be problematic. He expressed preference for a slower, more deliberate approach and believed a refined draft can be done in 30 days.

Commissioner Mangum shared that she thought the Commission would be reviewing a more finalized document, but instead it feels like a “jigsaw puzzle.”

Commissioner Berlin agreed with the need for a clean version to go to Council. She raised concerns that if all comments are submitted by April 4th, the result could be a messy document filled with disjointed suggested edits, which would be difficult for the Commission to meaningfully review. Chair Lindwall echoed concerns about the volume of last-minute comments coming in on April 4th.

Alison Leipsiger explained the process moving forward: Commissioners must submit their specific feedback in writing by April 4th, including which public comments they agree with. Staff will then compile all submitted recommendations, and the Commission will vote on each item. This approach is intended to eliminate ambiguity about staff interpretation—Commissioners will be voting directly on the proposed language. While formatting the final version may require a change order to make it look more finalized, there will be no confusion about what changes are being approved.

Commissioner Berlin expressed concern about the reality of the current timeline. She questioned how staff would be able to collect, synthesize, and present hundreds of comments—from the public, boards, commissions, and commissioners—by the proposed April 9th deadline, only a week after the April 4 cutoff. She's worried the result will be a confusing document (e.g., a Word file with overlapping comment boxes from different people suggesting conflicting changes to the same sentence). She also pointed out that some feedback supports the plan as-is, while others oppose it entirely, and that these broad sentiments may not be adequately reflected. She wondered if the Commission could realistically review and vote on all this feedback in a single evening meeting.

Steve Ruger emphasized the importance of written feedback and encouraged the Commission to seriously consider what has already been shared through both written and spoken comments.

Commissioner Puchtel noted that many comments are not actionable proposals and emphasized the need for commenters to suggest specific replacement language to help staff and Commissioners create a cleaner draft for Council.

Commissioner Mabadi suggested breaking up the work by allocating time to review each chapter, especially those dealing with weightier topics. He also expressed that someone would need to take the lead in filtering and organizing proposals for Land Use Commission votes.

Commissioner Berlin raised disagreement over who should be revising the document—staff or Commission—and reiterated that the “What We Heard” summary does not reflect the full range of opinions shared.

There was broad discussion about the difference between comments and proposals, and the importance of actionable, specific recommendations. Commissioners agreed that the Commission must make final decisions on what gets forwarded to Council.

Commissioner Halik closed by saying that speaking during meetings is not enough—submitting concrete proposals is more productive. Mr. Ruger added that spoken comments are being taken seriously and that Commissioners should elevate ideas they agree with.

#### **IV. COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

A member of the public suggested that to facilitate the editing process, all boards and commissions that previously gave input should be given access to the editable Google Doc version of the plan—similar to what the Preservation Commission received. This would allow for line-by-line edits rather than scattered comments in a PDF with bubbles, which would be much harder to manage. The goal is to make it easier to organize and incorporate feedback efficiently.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Lindwall asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Motion:** Puchtel

**Second:** Mangum

**Motion Passed 7-0**

**Ayes:** Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Puchtel, Halik, Berlin, Mirintchev

**Nays:**

**Abstain:**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm**

The next Evanston Land Use Commission meeting is scheduled to be held **on Wednesday, March 26, 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