



MEETING MINUTES

LAND USE COMMISSION

Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

6:00 PM

James C. Lytle City Council Chamber, Second Floor
Lorraine H. Morton City Hall, 909 Davis Street

Members Present: Loren Berlin, Kiril Mirintchev, Chair Jeanne Lindwall, Darush Mabadi, Jameika Mangum, Brian Johnson, Max Puchtel,

Members Absent: Myrna Arevalo

Staff Present: Neighborhood Land Use Planner Meagan Jones, Planning and Policy Supervisor Erin Baynes, Preservation Planner Cade Sterling, Planning Manager Elizabeth Williams, Community Development Director Sarah Flax

Presiding Member: Jeanne Lindwall

I. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

Chair Lindwall called the meeting to order at 6:00pm and a quorum was met.

Chair Lindwall opened the April 16th Land Use Commission meeting by clarifying that this was a continuation of the Comprehensive Plan public hearing. She noted that public testimony had closed on April 4th, so no additional public comment would be taken at this meeting. Instead, the focus would be on the Commission's deliberation. She reminded attendees that the meeting was being audio and video recorded. The Commission's primary task for the evening would be to review the policies and actions in the plan with the goal of working through the entire document. This would allow staff to prepare an updated draft for the next meeting on May 21st.

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.

Planning and Policy Supervisor Erin Baynes opened the presentation by outlining the structure of the April 16th Land Use Commission meeting. She explained that the meeting would begin

with a review of key themes drawn from both public comments and commissioner feedback. These included housing, development, diversity, preservation, the lakefront, affordable housing, environmental hazards, and more.

Ms. Baynes introduced a review packet that consolidated all comments into two main sections: consent items (minor changes that likely need no discussion) and items for discussion (substantive policy changes needing commissioner input). She noted that the consent items would be handled in bulk, similar to City Council procedures, while the discussion items would receive focused review.

She also clarified that non-action items (e.g., typos, formatting, duplicative content, or previously agreed-upon edits) would not be reviewed during the meeting. Additionally, she walked commissioners through the structure of the packet, including a chapter-based discussion list, a thematically sorted list of issues, and a final section with requested additions submitted prior to the meeting. Lastly, she clarified that page numbers in the review packet might differ from the original document due to added content like cover sheets and agendas, and directed commissioners to the Google Drive for aligned references.

A brief discussion followed on items presented within the consent agenda and several items were pulled from the agenda.

Commissioner Puchtel motioned to approve consent agenda items with exception of items 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 8.1, and 14.1.

Motion: Puchtel

Second: Berlin

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Discussion of the Preservation Chapter followed. Commissioner Puchtel explained why he pulled item 14.1, emphasizing the need to balance historic preservation with modern flexibility.

Cade Sterling provided background on the suggestion under discussion. A broader discussion followed, during which Commissioner Puchtel reiterated the importance of maintaining flexibility while ensuring preservation goals are not compromised.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the treatment of contributing structures in historic districts. Staff clarified that the ordinance does not distinguish between contributing and non-contributing structures and that local historic districts carry more regulatory authority. Johnson also raised questions about the paragraph preceding the proposed suggestion.

Commissioner Puchtel proposed that an additional policy or action be added to Preservation Policy 8 to reflect the discussion and balance mentioned.

Commissioner Puchtel made a motion to approve all of the changes for Chapter 14 under items for discussion approved as shown under items for discussion.

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Berlin
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Puchtel made a motion to approve item 14.1 under items for discussion to add a policy statement (#8) drafted by Preservation to reflect statements in narrative about including flexibility.

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Berlin
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Commissioner Puchtel made a motion to approve item 14.1 under items for discussion with amended language.

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Berlin
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Puchtel
Nayes: Mangum, Johnson
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Vote on Chapter 5 - Commissioner Puchtel votes to approve proposed language as is under items for discussion

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Berlin
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Chapter 6 discussion:

Commissioner Mirintchev raised questions about the inclusion of infrastructure topics like free public Wi-Fi and rainwater sewage systems, noting that no language was currently proposed.

He referenced European models of widespread Wi-Fi access and questioned what the City's role could be in providing it.

Commissioner Johnson cautioned against overly specific language regarding technology, suggesting that any reference should be general due to rapid changes in the field. The digital divide was also mentioned as a key issue.

Commissioner Puchtel proposed a motion directing staff to draft general language that promotes wireless access and addresses the digital divide.

Commissioner Berlin felt the current language about the police headquarters and 2100 Ridge Avenue was too specific. Commissioner Puchtel and Commissioner Mabadi agreed, with Commissioner Mabadi suggesting that the plan should refer more broadly to city facilities in need of attention and to “say it without saying it.”

Commissioner Puchtel made a motion to approve item 6.1 under items for discussion for Chapter 6 - Community systems maintaining the word “fully” and with the exception of the last two bullet points and policy statement CS 4.6 within the packet with intent that staff create more general language reflective of this evening’s discussion.

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Mabadi
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel
Nays:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Chapter 8 discussion - Environment

Commissioner Johnson fully supports both suggestions provided.

Commissioner Mangum suggested adding language to prevent certain uses from being overly concentrated in specific neighborhoods. A discussion followed on how to incorporate this idea into the plan.

Commissioner Berlin moves to approve suggested edits with addition of actions by staff to look at lakefront protection.

Motion: Berlin
Second: Puchtel
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel
Nays:
Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Chapter 9 Discussion

Chair Lindwall notes 3.4. suggestion from Preservation Commission

Commissioner Berlin moves to accept changes to PO 4.1 and the Preservation Commission language. Seconded by Puchtel. Johnson suggests amendment “develop a master plan to pedestrian and bike access on east west streets to the lakefront” strike “with respective zoning changes”

Commissioner Berlin moved to accept the proposed change to policy statement PO 4.1 and add preservation commission language regarding history. Seconded by Puchtel. A friendly amendment proposed by Commission Johnson. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Berlin amended her motion to: adopt 9.1 with the edit of “develop a master plan to improve pedestrian and bike access through East-West streets from downtown to the lakefront” and add suggested Preservation Commission language.

Motion: Berlin
Second: Puchtel
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Chapter 11 Health and Wellbeing

Chair Lindwall introduced items for review. Commissioner Mangum asked why the language in item 11.1 under items for discussion is proposed to be deleted. Discussion followed with Commissioners agreeing with the spirit of it but wanting to revise language. It was proposed to take the crossed out portion and make it a separate Policy 7.

Commissioner Mabadi questioned what “mitigate” means in item 11.2 under items for discussion and if the responsibility of it is on the City. A brief discussion followed.

Commissioner Berlin moved to say “engage in efforts to eliminate health hazards of brownfield sites and environmental hazards.” Discussion followed on possible language.

Commissioner Mirintchev asked how realistic it would be to do a policy statement TLW 5.9. Discussion followed.

Chair Lindwall made a motion to accept 11.1 with edit to delete “while bringing together...” and making it a new policy statement #7. 11.2 policy will read policy #6 “engage in efforts to eliminate environmental hazards that impact health” and accept 5.7 - 5.10.

Motion: Lindwall

Second: Puchtel

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Mangum, Johnson, Puchtel

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Puchtel motioned to change TLW 5.6 language to “Work to mitigate the impact of brownfield and environmentally contaminated sites on their surroundings”

Motion: Puchtel

Second: Mangum

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Johnson, Puchtel, Mangum

Nayes: Mabadi

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Chapter 10 – Housing:

Commissioner Puchtel opposed the proposed revision to item 10.1 under items for discussion, stating it would reverse progress. He supported item 10.2, emphasizing the need to consider all of Evanston.

Commissioner Johnson supported item 10.1 as written and opposed item 10.2, citing public resistance to multi-unit housing in single-family zones. Commissioner Mabadi agreed.

Commissioner Berlin urged a broader perspective, noting this is not a zoning discussion but overlaps with it. She emphasized the City's housing shortage and supported retaining the original language of 10.1 while adopting new language for 10.2.

Chair Lindwall leaned toward the idea of preserving existing housing types but acknowledged that increasing supply means increasing density. Commissioner Mabadi pointed out that ADUs are already allowed citywide and argued that affordable housing efforts shouldn't disproportionately burden single-family homeowners.

Commissioner Puchtel pushed back on the notion that the whole community opposes widespread multi-unit housing, noting that the closest signal of public sentiment was Mayor Biss's election.

Commissioner Mirintchev made a motion to change item 10.1 to “preserve and increase Evanston’s diverse housing choices” and eliminate 10.2. Puchtel will not support. Additional discussion followed.

Motion: Mirintchev
Second: Mangum
Motion Passed

Ayes: Mirintchev, Lindwall, Mabadi, Johnson, Mangum
Nayes: Puchtel, Berlin
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Berlin expressed support for item 10.3 under items for discussion and recommended keeping 10.4. Commissioner Johnson explained the intent behind his suggestion for these items.

Commissioner Mangum supported language that allows flexibility for future technologies.

Commissioner Mabadi questioned the phrase “removing barriers,” suggesting it be replaced with something like “explore creating efficiencies in plan review.”

Chair Lindwall noted uncertainty about what specific barriers are being referenced, implying caution in using that language.

Commissioner Mangum proposed using “streamline process,” which Commissioner Mirintchev supported, suggesting “simplify or streamline.”

Commissioner Mirintchev also noted that 10.4 has strong language but should apply broadly, not just to non-residential conversions into housing.

Johnson motions to edit items 10.3 and 10.4 to read "facilitate the use of new innovate construction technologies, such as manufactured and modular construction, and streamline plan review permitting and inspection process...." and not using the suggested language change for 10.4.

Motion: Johnson
Second: Berlin
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Johnson, Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Puchtel made a motion to reject deletion of item 10.5 under items for discussion.

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Mabadi
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Mangum made a motion to approve items 10.6 and 10.7 as written.

Motion: Mangum
Second: Johnson
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioners discussed item 10.8 under items for discussion and agreed on the importance of collaborating with local lenders like Wintrust or other banks that have relevant programs to provide knowledge and support.

Commissioner Berlin supported the idea and said it's a good addition, proposing draft language. Commissioner Puchtel stated that liked the concept but raised concern that the current language may be too broad, applying to all income levels, including those who may not need assistance.

Commissioner Mabadi elaborated on typical housing expenses, adding context to who the policy should target. General discussion followed on how to tailor the policy effectively.

Commissioner Berlin made a motion to update item 10.8 to read “Explore establishing a down-payment assistance program for income eligible first-time homeowners in collaboration with local financial institutions.”

Motion: Berlin
Second: Johnson
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Chair Lindwall motioned update item 10.9 by adding “and environmentally contaminated” after brownfield.

Motion: Lindwall

Second: Puchtel

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Berlin brings up some concerns regarding item 10.10 under items for discussion. Discussion followed with Commissioner Puchtel suggesting possible amended language.

Commissioner Puchtel motions to edit item 10.10 to read “Study opportunities for property tax relief for income-eligible Evanston residents.”

Commissioner Johnson raised concerns about the burden of property tax bills on residents.

A broader discussion followed on whether the City has the authority or tools to address this issue. Planning Manager Liz Williams noted that the City Council had previously referred a tax circuit breaker concept for further exploration.

Commissioner Mangum pointed out that because property taxes are primarily determined by the Cook County Assessor, the City's ability to directly impact them is limited.

Commissioner Puchtel's motion was voted on and approved.

Motion: Puchtel

Second: Berlin

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Chair Lindwall motioned that language from the Preservation Commission and Environment Board that may not have been discussed during the meeting be included for the next meeting.

Motion: Lindwall

Second: Johnson

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi

Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Chapter 2 Summary – “What We Heard”:

Commissioner Berlin explained her suggestion to revise how Land Use Commission feedback is represented—emphasizing a balanced summary of opinions rather than a singular narrative.

Chair Lindwall raised concerns about how Survey 2 outcomes were presented, noting a tally she conducted did not match what’s currently in the plan. She recommended deleting the bullet list. Ms. Williams clarified that what is labeled “Survey 2” is technically the third survey (the second being for focus groups).

Commissioner Berlin agreed with the need to more accurately reflect public feedback, particularly in with item 2.3 under items for discussion.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the rationale for the chapter title change. Other commissioners voiced support for the proposed new title, “What We Heard.”

Commissioner Johnson motioned to adopt item 2.1, revise item 2.3 to acknowledge dissenting opinions, and reject item 2.2, keeping the What We Heard title. Seconded by Commissioner Berlin. Discussion followed clarifying “all takeaways” meaning to acknowledge both sides of what was heard.

Motion: Johnson
Second: Berlin
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Johnson, Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Puchtel motioned to reject the change proposed in item 2.4. Seconded by Mabadi. Commissioner Mangum proposed the addition of “while reinforcing neighborhood character.” Commissioners Puchtel and Berlin were not in favor of the change due to “character” being too ambiguous.

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Mabadi
Motion passed, original language kept.

Ayes: Berlin, Puchtel, Mabadi, Lindwall
Nayes: Johnson, Mangum, Mirintchev
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Item 2.5 & 2.6 Summary:

Commissioner Mabadi opposed the change proposed in item 2.5; Commissioners Puchtel and Berlin agreed. However, Commissioner Johnson supported it, saying the key takeaways align with public feedback.

Commissioner Mabadi emphasized that increasing density doesn't require removing R1 zoning—it is not just about building apartment buildings.

Commissioner Puchtel proposed removing Chapter 2 altogether and making it a separate background report; Mirintchev agreed, suggesting a response summary table instead.

Commissioner Johnson opposed removing the chapter, noting he's never seen a plan omit public engagement details.

Commissioner Berlin recommended retitling the section to “Key Takeaways from Public Comment.”

Chair Lindwall proposed eliminating item 2.6 and expressed support for keeping original language for item 2.5 for increasing housing and transparent zoning. She proposed language to support protecting single-family zoning in R1 and R2, but withdrew her motion.

Commissioner Berlin moved to revise item 2.5 to say “on the question of support for increased housing density and transparent zoning, some proponents support it and some proponents were against it.” and repeating that structure for remaining items.

Motion: Berlin

Second: Mabadi

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Johnson, Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Mangum made a motion to adopt 2.6 “support for protecting single-family zoning in R1 and R2 Districts with some in support and some against.”

Motion: Mangum

Second: Berlin

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Johnson, Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Mangum made a motion to accept 2.7 added language of some in support and some against.

Motion: Mangum
Second: Puchtel
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Chair Lindwall pointed out that, in reference to item 2.8 under items for discussion, several people expressed support for establishing a Design Commission instead of a Committee.

Commissioner Mangum made a motion to add the language for 2.8 with the change from Committee to Commission.

Motion: Mangum
Second: Lindwall
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Puchtel made a motion to accept item 2.9 as proposed.

Motion: Puchtel
Second: Mangum
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:
Abstain:
Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Berlin made a motion to keep the original language in item 2.10 and add the proposed language.

Motion: Berlin
Second: Puchtel
Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall,Johnson,Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi
Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

Commissioner Puchtel motioned to continue discussion to May 21, 2025

Motion: Puchtel

Second: Mabadi

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Johnson, Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

III. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Rosinski thanked the Commission for their work and expressed concerns about the planning process, noting that examples from other cities show different approaches to affordable housing. She shared that there's a growing sense of distrust in the current process. Although survey data was collected, she pointed out that the word "density" did not appear in respondents' comments, raising questions about the direction of the plan. Rosinski also criticized a shift in approach, where the City initially planned to hire the firm Teska but then abruptly changed course to include zoning-related work without clear direction from the City Council.

Dave Galloway commended the Commission's work and emphasized two elements he believes should have been more prominent in the plan. First, he highlighted walkability as a way to promote health, alternative transportation, and stronger community connections. Second, he supported the creation of the Urban Design Commission, praising Evanston's history in architecture and design. However, he hoped for greater clarity around the Commission's specific duties and responsibilities.

Linda Damashek focused her remarks on the process, expressing concern that the "items for discussion" were hard to locate, even though they had been posted online. She referenced a conversation with Steve Ruger, who had stated that the public would be given another chance to comment and would receive an updated version of the plan well ahead of the next meeting on May 21. She urged the City to honor that commitment out of respect for those investing time in public feedback.

Sheila Sullivan also thanked the Commission but shared frustration over what she sees as a lack of transparency in the administration. She noted discrepancies between documents posted online and those in the meeting packet, although the difference appeared to be mostly formatting. She raised a broader concern about fairness—asking whether it's right to eliminate parking lots for new housing developments and whether such decisions prioritize newcomers over existing residents. She also questioned the plan's claim that parking lots are underused during most of the day.

Finally, an unnamed speaker thanked Commissioner Mabadi for being open to discussing duplexes. The speaker said their experience canvassing during the election revealed broader public support for additional housing types than what has been reflected in meeting discussions. They emphasized that ADUs (accessory dwelling units) have already begun to shift zoning norms. However, they lamented the loss of housing diversity—giving the example of duplexes being converted to single-family homes while the reverse rarely happens. They also argued that, although EE45 wasn't officially a referendum, opposition to it essentially made it one. They urged the Commission to recognize that the broader community includes more than just those who attend public meetings.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lindwall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:53pm

Motion: Puchtel

Second: Mangum

Motion Passed

Ayes: Berlin, Mirintchev, Lindwall, Johnson, Puchtel, Mangum, Mabadi

Nayes:

Abstain:

Absent: Arevalo

The next Evanston Land Use Commission meeting is scheduled to be held **on Wednesday, May 14th, 2025, at 7:00 pm**, in the James C. Lytle Council Chambers in the Lorraine H. Morton City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Justin Bock, Administrative lead

Reviewed by
Meagan Jones, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner