



Land Use Commission

Wednesday, October 8, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

Lorraine H. Morton City Hall, James C. Lytle City Council Chambers

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
PRESENT:**

Kiril Mirintchev,
Jameika Mangum,
Jeanne Lindwall, Chair
Max Putchel,
Luke Harris-Ferree

**COMMITTEE MEMBER
ABSENT:**

Myrna Arevalo,
Brian Johnson,
Darush Mabadi,
Loren Berlin

STAFF PRESENT:

Elizabeth Williams, Planning Manager
Sarah Flax, Director of Community Development
Uri Pachter, Senior Housing Planner

A. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM: JEANNE LINDWALL, CHAIR

B. NEW BUSINESS

A. Land Use Commission Rules & Procedures - Update

The Land Use Commission should discuss and provide feedback on amendments to their rules and procedures prior to their final review at the November 12, 2025 meeting.

For Discussion

Planning Manager Liz Williams explained that, after several years as a combined body, it is a good time for the Commission to review and update its rules and procedures. She noted that staff prepared a high level outline of topics, starting with virtual participation, and invited commissioners to add their own concerns. Ms. Williams said staff will bring a marked up version of the rules to the November 12 meeting for more detailed edits. She added that the Commission has only held one meeting with virtual participation so far, and Chair Lindwall opened the floor for initial feedback.

Planning Manager Liz Williams said the current rules do not address virtual participation, and staff wants to clarify how the public can provide comments or testimony online and how commissioners may participate virtually under the Open Meetings Act. She noted this would align the Commission with other City boards.

Commissioner Puchtel asked if staff is prepared to manage all aspects of virtual participation, acknowledging the added administrative work.

Planning Manager Liz Williams responded that, while it adds some work, providing remote access is important for equity and fairness, and staff can handle the logistics since multiple staff members are usually present at meetings.

Commissioner Mangum said virtual participation worked well and is important for members of the public who may have scheduling conflicts, such as working outside Evanston. She asked if some conditions for commissioners participating virtually could be removed. Planning Manager Liz Williams responded that commissioner participation must align with the Open Meetings Act, which only allows certain circumstances. She noted the commission would need to vote to recognize remote participants and maintain a full in-person quorum. All provisions would need to be clarified in the rules.

Planning Manager Liz Williams then explained that the rules regarding continuance requests need clarification. Currently, any taxpayer of record within the noticing radius can request a continuance, which ranges from 500 to 1,000 feet depending on the application. The rules also allow those with an interest in the property, such as business tenants or renters, to request a continuance, though the commission has discretion in those cases. Staff recommended ensuring that any property owner of record is automatically granted a continuance, while maintaining commission discretion for others who do not own property, consistent with current practice.

Commissioner Puchtel asked what reasons are there why someone would have justifiable reason for wanting a continuance.

Planning Manager Liz Williams responded that continuances are typically requested to allow additional evidence or expert testimony to be submitted. She noted that commission packets are usually distributed the Friday before a Wednesday meeting, which may not give enough time for preparation. By city code, continuances must be granted to taxpayers of record, and previous attempts to change this requirement did not pass City Council. She also noted that state law may provide additional provisions supporting continuance requests.

Discussion focused on clarifying continuance requests. Continuances allow individuals to provide additional evidence or expert testimony, particularly when notice periods are short. City code requires automatic continuances for taxpayers of record, while non-property owners may request one at the commission's discretion. The commission discussed treating all participants within the noticing area equally, allowing oral requests without requiring written reasons, and making the request early during initial comments to avoid repeating testimony. Rules should encourage, but not require, stating a reason to help guide deliberations and inform applicants. Only one continuance per individual is allowed unless

the commission votes to reopen public comment.

Discussion then focused on deadlines for submission of written evidence, petitions, and group testimony. Staff recommended allowing adequate time for review and verification of petitions, particularly for map amendment cases, suggesting submissions at least 24 hours before meetings. Current rules for group testimony require written requests five business days in advance, but staff proposed reducing this to allow more flexibility. The commission discussed maintaining clarity on what constitutes a valid petition, providing enough time for staff to review materials, and ensuring public participants can organize and submit testimony efficiently. Staff recommended reducing the notice period to one day while requiring a list of individuals the speaker represents. Members of the group would not have separate speaking time beyond the designated representative. Speaking time for a group would generally be 10 minutes, with potential adjustments based on group size at the chair's discretion. The commission emphasized keeping rules simple, ensuring public input, and balancing fairness with efficiency.

The discussion covered reducing the deadline for applicants to request additional presentation time from five business days to about 24 hours, aligning with the rules for group testimony. Staff presentations at hearings were also addressed. While not required for every case, it was suggested that staff provide a brief overview of the project, relevant conditions, and their recommendations, especially for major cases, to help commissioners understand the context before public comment. The consensus was to incorporate this as standard practice rather than a strict requirement.

The discussion focused on clarifying the commission's role in reviewing cases and adding conditions. Staff recommended emphasizing that deliberations should focus on the specific standards of approval and that any conditions added should be intended to ensure those standards are met. Commissioners agreed that a condition could be added to satisfy a standard even if they ultimately vote against the project. It was also suggested that meeting minutes include a clear summary of the standards, conditions, and vote to aid city council and public understanding. Written findings of fact were discussed, with consensus that they are not strictly required, but staff-prepared summaries of how standards are met or not met are helpful for deliberation and recording in the minutes.

Staff and the commission addressed clarifying cross-examination rules, which currently exist in the language but lack detail. The goal is to allow the public to ask directed questions to applicants without turning it into an uncontrolled back-and-forth. It was suggested that the chair would manage the process, but staff would consult legal to ensure compliance with Illinois land use law and avoid adversarial proceedings. It was suggested that defining cross-examination and providing examples would help. There was also a brief discussion on motions: whether a failed affirmative motion needs a separate motion to recommend denial. The group agreed it likely isn't necessary, but legal should confirm.

C. DISCUSSION

A. Draft Housing4All/Strategic Housing Plan Overview

Discuss the City of Evanston Housing Gap Analysis and the Housing4All draft plan

For Discussion

Senior Housing Planner Uri Pachter presented an overview of Evanston's draft *Housing for All* strategic plan, released in September, which outlines a 10-year framework for addressing housing needs, priorities, and actionable strategies. He highlighted that about a third of Evanston households, roughly 11,000, are cost-burdened, with nearly half of renters and one in four homeowners spending more than 30% of their income on housing. The plan draws on a consultant-led housing gap analysis that identified affordability gaps, racial and economic disparities, and a shortage of missing middle housing, such as duplexes, triplexes, and small multifamily units.

The draft plan's objectives are to preserve existing affordable units, create new housing options including missing middle and special needs housing, and protect residents from displacement. It sets a target of adding or preserving between 3,000 and 5,000 units over the next decade, with secondary metrics focused on permanent affordability, reducing homelessness, leveraging funding, and fostering housing partnerships. Senior Housing Planner Uri Pachter noted that the strategies are intentionally broad to gather community feedback, which remains open through October 12 via an online form, QR code, or in-person submissions. He emphasized that addressing Evanston's housing challenges will require bold action, collaboration, and creative solutions to maintain the city's economic and racial diversity. No formal action from the commission was required at the meeting; the presentation was primarily for feedback and discussion.

Chair Lindwall opened by urging everyone to complete the housing survey, noting that the discussion wasn't about endorsing specific strategies. She flagged what looked like an anomaly on the rental cost-burden map, pointing out that a northwest census tract dominated by residents of the Presbyterian Homes may be skewing the data, similar to student-heavy areas where household reporting gets messy. She said the gap analysis was strong overall but raised a few clarifying questions, starting with whether Evanston is actually losing duplexes, townhomes, and other missing-middle units, and whether the plan has concrete evidence to back that up. Senior Housing Planner Uri Pachter stated he was not sure what the change is overtime for those types of units but it is something that can be double checked.

Chair Lindwall followed up with questions about the household income charts, noting the unusually high share of Asian households reported under \$25,000 and wondering if student households were skewing that data as well. She emphasized that student-heavy census tracts complicate income analysis, even if it's hard to pinpoint exactly which ones. She also flagged a major gap for middle-income seniors who need smaller, accessible units, not duplexes or townhouses with stairs. She suggested the plan focus more on modest multifamily buildings with elevators, arguing that "missing middle" should reflect both unit type and household income.

Commissioner Puchtel complimented the presentation and asked for more specifics on the missing-middle deficit. He wanted to know whether the analysis pinpointed where those missing units are geographically by ward, neighborhood, or any other breakdown so the

Commission could understand which areas are already well-served and which ones are falling short. He said it's helpful to know there's a several-thousand-unit gap, but it would be even more useful to know where the need is concentrated so future development can be focused accordingly.

Senior Housing Planner Uri Pachter said the consultant's scope didn't include mapping where missing-middle units are lacking, so the analysis does not break it down by ward or neighborhood. He explained that there isn't a simple metric that says one area has "enough" or another has "too few," since even places with a lot of these units might still be good candidates for more. He added that staff can dig deeper into the data and use it to help guide future zoning updates, but ultimately decisions about where to prioritize new missing-middle housing will come down to policy direction from the City Council.

Commissioner Puchtel said the commission has often heard neighbors argue that their area already has "enough" affordable housing when new projects come forward, and he didn't weigh in on whether those claims are valid. His point was that when the zoning code gets rewritten and the housing plan shapes that work, he wants to be sure no part of Evanston is treated as off-limits for meeting the city's housing goals.

The discussion clarified that the plan isn't proposing a strict quota for new housing units, though the city recommends accommodating 3–5,000 units over the next decade, while over 11,000 households are currently cost-burdened. Participants praised the depth of data in the reports and historical context provided, but noted inconsistencies across different documents and emphasized the need to consolidate key findings into the comprehensive plan to guide long-term decision-making. Questions arose about the suitability of proposed housing types for middle-income seniors, geographic gaps in missing middle housing, and the challenges of actually implementing strategies such as accessory dwelling units or upzoning. Concerns were also raised about ensuring accountability, clearly assigning responsibility for projects, and tracking progress over time. Staff acknowledged these points, highlighted ongoing efforts to build a centralized, data-driven system for tracking metrics, and outlined next steps for incorporating feedback, revising the draft plan, and guiding decisions with a stronger evidence base. Historical context, including past housing patterns, redlining, and condo conversions, was also noted as important for understanding current trends.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT

E. ADJOURNMENT