



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

City Council - Special

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Stephen A. Renner, President
Trenton I. Weaver, Vice President
Karen J. Angelou
Merisa K. Bowers
Nancy R. McGregor
Kaylee Padova
Michael Schnetzer

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

6:30 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

Joint Meeting with Planning Commission

A. CALL TO ORDER: Roll Call

Gahanna City Council met in Special Session on Wednesday, October 18, 2023, in Council Chambers. President of Council Stephen A. Renner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Planning Commission joined City Council for a Workshop Session focused on the city's zoning code. Planning Commission members in attendance included Mr. Greenberg, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Mako, Mr. Shapaka, and Mr. Tamarkin. Mr. Suriano and Mr. Wester were absent. The agenda was published on October 12, 2023.

Present 6 - Karen J. Angelou, Merisa K. Bowers, Nancy R. McGregor, Kaylee Padova, Stephen A. Renner, and Trenton I. Weaver

Absent 1 - Michael Schnetzer

B. WORKSHOP:

1. Discussion on the City's Zoning Code

[2023-0192](#)

ZoneCo Presentation to City Council and Planning Commission
10.18.2023

Mayor Jadwin opened the discussion by expressing her gratitude to the attendees for their presence. She acknowledged the significance of having both Council and Planning Commission members present, highlighting the importance of the ongoing zoning code project. Mayor Jadwin acknowledged the valuable time everyone had dedicated to this crucial initiative. She emphasized the critical role of the zoning code, which directly impacts residents, businesses, and the future development of the city. The outdated nature of the current zoning code, established in the late 1950s, was mentioned. Mayor Jadwin pointed out the disparity between this outdated code and the current vision and aspirations of the Gahanna community. The necessity for modernization and specificity in addressing various aspects, such as fences, setbacks, land uses, and community growth, was

highlighted. Mayor Jadwin highlighted the community's desire for a zoning code that aligns with their vision for Gahanna. She noted the extensive work and engagement that had gone into the project over the past two years. She expressed her excitement about the current stage of the process, which involved gathering input from Planning Commission members, council members, and the community. Mayor Jadwin acknowledged the multiple public engagement opportunities, including the present meeting, and stressed the importance of this collective effort in shaping the city's future. She then transitioned the discussion to Director Blackford, acknowledging his dedication to the project.

Director of Planning Michael Blackford commenced his remarks by expressing gratitude to all in attendance for their valuable time, emphasizing the significance of the gathering. He introduced Mr. Sean Suder, a consultant from ZoneCo, who had a rich background in drafting zoning codes across various regions, states, and internationally. Mr. Suder, a former city attorney for Cincinnati, brought expertise and experience to the project. Director Blackford also introduced two key members of the planning team: Mr. Logan Stang, the manager of planning, who joined from a private planning firm, Planning Next, and had experience in the city of Dublin, and Ms. Maddie Capka, a planner with prior experience in the city of Dublin as well. These individuals played essential roles in shaping the document according to Gahanna's vision. He highlighted the extensive efforts that had gone into the project over the past couple of years, emphasizing the meticulous work involved in reviewing and formatting the existing 300-page zoning code. Director Blackford shared that the planning department had been engaged in several initiatives and had gathered feedback from the community and businesses. He stressed the importance of making the document more accessible and user-friendly for various stakeholders, including residents, small business owners, architects, planners, engineers, and attorneys. Director Blackford explained the necessity of updating the zoning code, given the changing dynamics of Gahanna. He mentioned previous initiatives like 'Go Forward Gahanna' (2015-2016), which identified areas needing improvement, and the comprehensive land use plan of 2019, which set the tone for the zoning code. He emphasized the importance of aligning the zoning code with the land use plan's recommendations and creating a document that provided clarity and direction for the community. Furthermore, Director Blackford stressed the significance of the zoning code in economic development. He cited a survey conducted by the Ohio Economic Development Association, highlighting that ease of permitting was ranked fourth out of nine factors by site selectors when considering a community for development. He clarified that "ease of permitting" did not imply leniency but meant providing clear guidelines and predictability, which were crucial for businesses and corporations looking to invest in a community. Director Blackford concluded his remarks by introducing Mr. Sean Suder, the lead consultant for the project, who would further delve into the details of the zoning code update.

Introduction/National Trends

Mr. Sean Suder, the lead principal and founder of ZoneCo, expressed his gratitude for the gathering and reminisced about the early days of the project,

where conversations were held over Zoom during the pandemic. He acknowledged the transformative events in Gahanna since the 2019 land use plan, highlighting the impact of the pandemic, shifts in work patterns, and significant local developments like the Intel plant and the upcoming airport terminal. Mr. Suder emphasized his role as a consultant, working nationally with extensive experience in drafting zoning codes across various states. He pointed out the mismatch between Gahanna's 1958 zoning regulations and the current vibrant community with a population of over 36,000. He questioned the relevance of regulations that were designed for a much smaller, agrarian community and emphasized the need for updating these regulations to align with the city's vision. Discussing national trends, Mr. Suder highlighted several key points:

1. Streamlining Administrative Procedures: Simplifying administrative processes and reducing uncertainties by allowing more administrative approvals, thereby expediting decision-making. He stressed the importance of maintaining standards while enhancing efficiency.

2. Office to Residential Conversions: Addressing the challenge of underutilized office spaces due to remote work trends. Mr. Suder discussed the need for regulations that facilitate the conversion of office spaces into residential units, aligning with market demands.

3. Reducing Off-Street Parking Minimums: Addressing the trend of revising parking requirements by either eliminating or right-sizing off-street parking minimums. He emphasized the importance of conducting parking studies and tailoring regulations to specific areas, as parking needs vary across communities.

4. Context-Based Zoning: Moving away from one-size-fits-all zoning models towards context-based zoning. Mr. Suder advocated for zoning regulations tailored to specific geographic areas, ensuring a better fit with the community's character and needs.

5. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): Highlighting the widespread interest in ADUs as a means to address housing challenges. Mr. Suder explained the multiple benefits of ADUs, including potential solutions for affordable housing and facilitating aging in place.

6. Diversity of Housing Choices: Encouraging a variety of housing options, including stacked flats, townhomes, cottage courts, small lot homes, and senior housing. Mr. Suder emphasized the importance of diverse housing types to cater to different preferences and demographics, promoting community attractiveness and retention.

Land Use Plan

Mr. Suder focused on Gahanna's land use plan, highlighting key elements that emerged from the plan. The community's strong emphasis on promoting infill development was a central theme. Rather than expanding into undeveloped lands, the community expressed a desire to prioritize infill development,

fostering walkable nodes and intensifying existing areas. This approach aimed to create a more interconnected and vibrant community. Streamlining the development process was another significant aspect of the land use plan. The community sought to simplify and expedite the procedures involved in development. Character guidelines played a crucial role in shaping the visual identity of developments. The emphasis was on incorporating high-quality materials and designs, ensuring that new constructions did not appear generic but reflected a distinctive, locally rooted character. The Creekside District, identified as Gahanna's urban core within the suburbs, served as a model for other developments. The challenge was to incorporate elements from the Creekside District into other areas of Gahanna, ensuring a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing urban environment throughout the city. Promoting walkability emerged as a key goal. Mr. Suder explained that genuine walkability meant more than just having walking paths; it encompassed the ability to leave one's home and conveniently reach destinations such as coffee shops, post offices, and schools. This focus on walkability aimed to enhance residents' overall quality of life and promote a healthier lifestyle. Mr. Suder emphasized that these principles, outlined in the 2019 land use plan, remained pertinent today. The desire to maintain a cohesive community, foster walkability, and infuse developments with local character continued to guide Gahanna's urban development strategies.

Zoning Map

Mr. Suder detailed the efforts made to modernize Gahanna's zoning map, aligning it with the city's current needs and aspirations. He emphasized the need to simplify the existing zoning categories, which were numerous and often based on minor distinctions, such as density or lot size. The goal was to create a more straightforward and user-friendly map that reflected the contemporary Gahanna. One of the key objectives was to reduce non-conformities for existing buildings. Mr. Suder highlighted the importance of ensuring that changes in zoning wouldn't render existing buildings non-conforming, causing unnecessary complications, especially during processes like refinancing. The team worked diligently to avoid such situations. Simplification emerged as a central theme in the discussion. The aim was to make both the zoning maps and texts comprehensible to the average citizen. The complexity of the zoning code should not necessitate legal expertise; instead, residents should easily find information online or through city officials regarding various property-related queries. Simplification was viewed as a means to enhance accessibility and understanding for all citizens. Currently, Gahanna has 27 zoning districts, which Mr. Suder found excessive considering the city's population of 36,000. He advocated for streamlining these districts based on the actual development patterns present in the city. Rather than having a multitude of zones, the plan was to simplify the categories, focusing on what was genuinely present on the ground. Mr. Suder noted that this simplification process should be guided by the city's unique development patterns, ensuring that the zoning map was both reflective of reality and easy to navigate. Addressing the historical concept of single-use zoning, Mr. Suder critiqued its inefficiency, advocating for a more mixed-use approach in commercial areas. The proposed zoning map included five residential districts, each catering to different housing types and

densities. Additionally, there were three commercial districts, an institutional district, a manufacturing district, and a recreational district. Special attention was given to unique areas, such as the Old Gahanna District, which warranted specific regulations due to distinctive development patterns. In summary, Mr. Suder presented the proposed zoning map, which reflected a significant reduction from the original 27 districts to 14, aligning closely with the focus areas outlined in the city's land use plan. The effort was guided by the goal of simplification, ensuring that Gahanna's zoning map was both coherent and reflective of the city's current needs and vision.

Public Engagement

Mr. Suder acknowledged the commendable efforts of the city staff in engaging with the community. He specifically praised the team for their impressive initiatives, including attending events and meeting people where they were, recognizing that these approaches were more effective in reaching citizens compared to formal processes like town hall meetings. Visual preference surveys were highlighted as one of the methods employed, allowing residents to express their preferences regarding various building types and designs, particularly focusing on commercial structures. During the early stages of the code development, especially amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the city utilized visual preference surveys to gather public input. These surveys provided valuable insights into the community's preferences, shaping the code development process. In-person engagements also played a significant role, offering opportunities for direct communication and feedback. Mr. Suder noted that residents in Gahanna exhibited a preference for mixed-use and smaller-scale commercial building types. This inclination was notably reflected in the design of the Creekside district and other developments along Hamilton Road. The emphasis was on pedestrian-oriented spaces, with a focus on creating environments where residents, including school children, could comfortably walk, go to lunch, and engage in various activities. Additionally, Mr. Suder highlighted a shift in community preferences away from auto-oriented establishments like gas stations, drive-thrus, and strip malls. Although Gahanna had such establishments, especially along interstate corridors, the community expressed a desire for more appealing and walkable spaces. The discussion revolved around the prospect of redevelopment in the city, aiming to transform existing strip malls into vibrant, pedestrian-friendly areas. The objective was to code for these preferences, encouraging the creation of interesting, walkable places in the city, aligning with the community's aspirations for a more engaging urban environment.

Residential Zoning Districts

Mr. Suder outlined the proposed changes to Gahanna's residential zoning districts. He highlighted the reduction in the number of districts from eight to five. The first district he mentioned was the Estate Residential District, designed for single-unit dwellings with a minimum lot size of one acre. This district aimed to preserve the spacious character of certain areas within the community. Moving on, Mr. Suder discussed the R1 Large Lot District, characterized by a half-acre lot size. He pointed out the areas designated in

bright yellow on the visual representation, emphasizing the relatively larger lot sizes within this category. Next was the R2 Medium Lot District, featuring 9,000 square foot lots, slightly smaller than a quarter acre. These areas were denoted in an orangey color on the map, indicating a medium-sized housing option. Mr. Suder further explained the Small Lot Residential District (R3), where lots were reduced to 6,000 square feet. He acknowledged the community's feedback, indicating that this lot size represented a smaller, yet still viable, option for housing development. He discussed the potential for traditional neighborhood developments, which were more efficient in terms of both construction costs and infrastructure. Lastly, he introduced the concept of Multi-Unit Residences (R4), denoted by an 8,000 square foot minimum lot size. This district aimed to accommodate small-scale multi-unit or attached housing options, reflecting a historical approach to housing seen after World War II. Mr. Suder emphasized the flexibility within this category, allowing for diverse housing options, including two, three, or four-family dwellings on relatively small lots. He expressed enthusiasm about these options, stating that they provided residents with a variety of housing choices, enriching the community's living experience.

Commercial Zoning Districts

Mr. Suder began by discussing the commercial zoning districts in Gahanna, noting that there were three distinct categories. The first was the Office District, represented in light blue on the map. He mentioned that there were traditional office parks within this district, aligning with the existing development patterns in certain areas of the community. Next, he highlighted the Institutional District, represented in blue on the map. He pointed out that this district encompassed schools, religious assembly spaces, public administration buildings, and public parks. This district aimed to preserve spaces of community importance and utility. Mr. Suder then turned his attention to the Neighborhood Commercial District, represented in light pink on the map. He expressed particular interest in this district, emphasizing its unique characteristic of being integrated into residential neighborhoods along main streets. He explained that this district was designed to host smaller-scale businesses that served local communities, such as hair salons, art galleries, small restaurants, personal services, and doctor's offices. Mr. Suder underlined the significance of this district, highlighting its role in fostering walkable communities where residents could easily access essential services. Next, he focused on the Innovation & Manufacturing District, located in the southeastern part of the community. He noted that this district, represented in a distinct color on the map, was a key component of the South Gateway Focus area, emphasizing its importance in the overall development strategy. Mr. Suder then pointed out the Recreation and Conservation District, emphasizing the community's commitment to preserving green spaces and natural features. This district aimed to maintain the environmental integrity of certain areas within Gahanna. Lastly, he addressed the unique Creekside Districts, comprising the Creekside Mixed-Use Area and the surrounding residential zones. Mr. Suder stressed the significance of promoting high-quality pedestrian-oriented design within these districts. He highlighted the importance of character regulations and standards to ensure that any developments in these areas aligned with the

community's vision, preserving the historic and unique nature of the Creekside area.

Design Regulations

Mr. Suder delved into the Creekside Design Regulations, emphasizing their role in promoting the unique character of downtown Gahanna's mixed-use district. He introduced a variety of design standards that could be implemented, offering examples to illustrate potential components. Mr. Suder highlighted the significance of architectural diversity, emphasizing the need to avoid monotonous square-box structures. He stressed the importance of architectural interest, citing the utilization of different heights, roof elements, facade articulation, and window placements. These elements, he explained, contribute significantly to the visual appeal and atmosphere of a place. Moving on, he emphasized the importance of ground-floor features, advocating for a mix of retail, office, and even residential spaces. He discussed the need for high transparency in commercial businesses, awning consistency, sign standards, and lighting standards. These factors, he argued, contribute to the allure of a location, and should be thoughtfully considered. Discussing materials and colors, he praised the use of natural materials such as brick and stone in Gahanna's Creekside District. He underlined the sense of permanence and authenticity that natural materials provide, proposing muted tones like browns, tans, and whites to maintain a harmonious palette. Mr. Suder also touched upon the aspect of building access, stressing the necessity of clearly marked and accessible entrances. He noted the importance of managing pedestrian-auto conflicts and ensuring ease of movement for everyone in the area.

Signage Regulations

Mr. Suder addressed the complexity of signage regulations, acknowledging the challenge of balancing business visibility with aesthetic considerations. He emphasized the importance of signs in promoting businesses while ensuring public safety and adhering to aesthetic standards. He outlined the objectives of signage regulations, including enhancing public safety, achieving uniformity in sign dimensions and placements, and improving the city's aesthetics. Mr. Suder emphasized the need to update ordinances, especially concerning temporary signage, following legal developments related to the Reed case. He highlighted the delicate balance between protecting First Amendment rights and maintaining community aesthetics and safety standards. Mr. Suder discussed the creation of a comprehensive menu of sign types permitted in different zoning districts. He explained the community engagement process, indicating that pedestrian-oriented signs were favored in pedestrian areas, while auto-oriented signs were preferred in appropriate contexts. Providing specific examples, he criticized certain sign types, such as pole signs and excessive use of flags, for their negative impact on aesthetics and visibility. He stressed the importance of aligning sign standards with the community's vision. Concluding his overview, Mr. Suder invited attendees to share their thoughts and reactions, expressing a desire for feedback before proceeding to the drafting phase. He conveyed gratitude for everyone's attention and engagement, opening the floor for questions and comments.

Questions and Discussion from Planning Commission and Council

Ensuring the Longevity and Relevance of Gahanna's Zoning Code:

Mr. Greenberg, Planning Commission, acknowledged the age of the current zoning code, noting that it has been in place for 65 years. He raised concerns about the future longevity of the new code, considering the rapid changes expected in Gahanna due to factors like Intel's presence, airport developments, and a significant population increase projected over the next 50 years. He highlighted the likelihood of Gahanna undergoing faster and transformative changes.

In response to Mr. Greenberg's concerns, Mr. Suder agreed that the pace of change in Gahanna would likely accelerate, primarily driven by increasing land values and demand for development. He emphasized the importance of aligning the zoning code's duration with the land use plan it implements. Unlike other states, Ohio does not mandate comprehensive plans, offering both advantages and challenges. Mr. Suder stressed the significance of updating the land use plan regularly, suggesting a revision every five to seven years to keep up with evolving community needs. He recommended an annual or biennial review of the zoning code to ensure its relevance. He cautioned against a piecemeal approach, where regulations are adjusted reactively to specific issues, leading to a disjointed and inconsistent code. Mr. Suder emphasized the need for proactive measures, involving regular assessments, staff efforts, political commitment, and community engagement. He concluded by underlining the importance of avoiding another 50-year gap without updates, highlighting the adverse consequences such stagnation could bring to the community.

Evaluating the Role and Relevance of Estate Residential Zones in Gahanna:

Mr. Hicks, Planning Commission, raised a pertinent question regarding the retention of the estate residential zone. He noted that during his tenure on the Planning Commission, there had been no applications to rezone to the estate residential zone. He observed that existing parcels designated as estate residential typically sought rezoning for denser uses. Mr. Hicks pointed out that according to the city code, properties annexed automatically received the estate residential designation. Given these factors, he queried the value of retaining the estate residential designation.

In response to Mr. Hicks' query, Mr. Suder highlighted the dual purpose of retaining the estate residential zone. One purpose was to have a designated zone for annexed properties, providing a clear framework for their classification. The other aspect involved regulating the further subdivision of large lots until specific proposals were presented. Mr. Suder emphasized that the decision to rezone these areas would signify a change in the character of these large lot regions, indicating that it was a matter of policy choice without a definitive right or wrong answer.

Addressing Concerns about Non-Conformities in Residential Zoning Districts:

Mr. Mako, Planning Commission Vice Chair, inquired about the potential increase in non-conformities resulting from the reduction of residential zoning districts. He sought clarification on whether the city's approach considered existing setbacks and other regulations to prevent complications and confusion during the rezoning process.

Mr. Suder responded affirmatively, stating that a thorough analysis was conducted to avoid creating numerous non-conformities that could disrupt residents' financial arrangements. He acknowledged that some non-conformities might emerge, especially if the objective was to reshape the development pattern of specific areas. However, he emphasized the importance of preserving the stability of single-family residential areas, ensuring the recalibration of new districts was conducted with careful consideration.

Logan Stang, Planning Manager, provided additional insights from the staff's perspective. He mentioned ongoing scenario testing aimed at minimizing non-conformities. Stang shared that the staff had engaged in extensive discussions, dedicating hours to evaluating different areas of the city. Their goal was to ensure that the upcoming changes would be implemented in a way that reduced as many non-conformities as possible. This meticulous approach demonstrated the city's commitment to minimizing disruptions for its residents during the zoning transition.

Enhancing Mobility through Zoning and Land Use:

Council President Renner raised concerns about parking and its connection to mobility, particularly in the context of infill development and the redesign of key areas like Creekside. He emphasized the need to consider parking as a mobility issue and mentioned his unconventional perspective of addressing mobility challenges by reducing parking. He expressed interest in understanding the zoning and land use aspects related to transportation options, including walking, bicycling, and cars.

Mr. Suder sought clarification on the specific aspects of mobility Council President Renner was referring to, which encompassed various transportation options, including buses, bicycles, and walking. Council President Renner elaborated on the differentiation among these modes of transportation, highlighting the complexity of modern mobility.

Mr. Suder responded, addressing the zoning and land use aspects of mobility. He highlighted two essential factors: first, the importance of the subdivision ordinance in ensuring new developments have connections to existing sidewalks and roadways, promoting a well-connected urban environment instead of isolated cul-de-sacs. Second, he emphasized the role of zoning regulations in creating pedestrian-friendly environments. While the city had limited jurisdiction over the actual pavement, zoning regulations could encourage walkability, support pedestrian activities, and promote density in specific areas to facilitate different modes of transportation. Mr. Suder also mentioned strategies like requiring new developments to connect to bike trails

or lanes, emphasizing the city's efforts to enhance mobility options within the framework of zoning and land use regulations.

Strategic Zoning for Sustainable Growth:

Mr. Shapaka, Planning Commission Chair, raised a critical question about the impact of the proposed zoning changes on Gahanna's population. He sought clarification on whether the new zoning code aimed to increase the city's population from 36,000 to 50,000 residents or to maintain the current population level. He emphasized the need to understand the goals and intentions behind the proposed changes.

Mr. Suder responded by acknowledging that most of Gahanna's land was already developed, predominantly as single-family residential areas. He clarified that the proposed changes primarily targeted areas of opportunity, such as underutilized shopping centers or large parking lots. While the exact population increase was uncertain, he emphasized the importance of promoting housing opportunities in areas where demand existed, thereby fostering growth while maintaining the city's character. He highlighted the focus on diversity of housing supply and the potential for growth in specific redevelopment zones.

Director Blackford supported Mr. Suder's statement, emphasizing that the proposed zoning changes would not drastically alter existing residential areas, where about 60% of the land use was single-family residential. Instead, the changes would mainly focus on major corridors and specific redevelopment areas. He mentioned incorporating multifamily options in vacant or underutilized spaces, especially those with large parking lots or obsolete office buildings. Director Blackford emphasized that the goal was not to double the city's size but to enhance circulation within known community areas, thus improving the overall quality of life in Gahanna.

Mr. Shapaka acknowledged the importance of improving circulation within the established community. He emphasized the need to enhance connectivity between districts, ensuring that the quality of life in Gahanna rises as a result of the proposed zoning changes.

Director Blackford agreed with Mr. Shapaka's sentiment, expressing the commitment to avoid any decline in the quality of life due to the proposed changes. He emphasized that the zoning code update aimed to enhance the city's overall livability and ensure a positive impact on the community.

Strategic Zoning and Financial Considerations:

Councilmember Bowers posed a question regarding the financial implications embedded in the proposed zoning changes. She sought clarification on how municipal funding realities, including property tax and income tax generation, were integrated into the proposal.

Director Blackford expressed gratitude for Councilmember Bowers' question. He emphasized the connection between zoning, permitting, and the city's tax

base. He stressed the importance of strategic redevelopment in areas identified by the community for revitalization. By focusing on specific activities in these designated zones, the city could enhance the job base and property tax revenue. He assured the council that the planning team was mindful of the financial implications and was working strategically to align the zoning changes with the city's long-term financial health. Director Blackford highlighted the need to move away from overly permissive zoning regulations, which allowed numerous uses without regard to their compatibility and financial benefits.

Mr. Suder reiterated the importance of occupied spaces in driving revenue. He emphasized that empty parking spaces, while necessary, did not contribute to tax revenue. The focus, he argued, should be on activities that attracted people and businesses, ultimately fostering economic growth within the community.

Exploring Innovative Zoning Strategies and ADUs:

Mr. Greenberg, Planning Commission, inquired about innovative practices from other parts of the country that Gahanna's code might benefit from. He sought insight into unique elements that could enhance the city's existing code and planning initiatives.

Mr. Suder provided valuable suggestions, indicating that right-sizing off-street parking minimums could be a progressive step. He mentioned the potential integration of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), also known as granny flats, which could offer diverse housing choices. He acknowledged the controversy around ADUs, particularly concerning their potential transformation into rental units. However, he highlighted the possibility of enforcing owner occupancy or familial residence requirements to mitigate these concerns.

Councilmember Bowers sought clarification regarding the regulation of ADUs, specifically in controlling their use as rental properties. She asked whether Gahanna could restrict ADUs for rental purposes.

Mr. Suder confirmed that Gahanna could indeed enforce restrictions on ADUs, such as requiring owner occupancy or familial residence, adding that legal consultation could validate these measures.

Director Blackford confirmed the feasibility of enforcing owner occupancy requirements for ADUs, emphasizing the importance of addressing immediate family member situations.

Mr. Suder delved into the complexities of ADU regulations, highlighting aspects like setbacks, screening, and height restrictions. He underscored the potential benefits of ADUs, especially in the context of aging in place, allowing residents to stay in their homes while generating additional income. He emphasized the importance of custom-tailoring regulations for Gahanna, aligning them with the city's unique needs and community vision.

Prioritizing Sustainability and Resilience:

Council Vice President Weaver expressed gratitude for Mr. Suder's presentation and raised questions about sustainability trends observed in other communities. He inquired about efforts to incorporate sustainability practices in zoning regulations and their potential inclusion in Gahanna's proposed code.

Mr. Suder emphasized stormwater runoff management as a crucial aspect of sustainability, focusing on limiting impervious surfaces on lots. He highlighted the importance of open space requirements, landscaping minimums, and embracing renewable energy sources like solar panels. He also addressed the controversial topic of solar panel installations and discussed the benefits of clustering subdivisions around natural features for conservation purposes.

Mr. Stang, Planning Manager, underscored the significance of sustainability efforts in the land use plan, emphasizing the incorporation of renewable energy practices. He discussed incentivizing developers and property owners to engage in sustainability initiatives, especially in redevelopment projects, to recover areas previously occupied by impervious surfaces.

Council President Renner acknowledged the importance of sustainability, restoration, and resilience. He stressed the need to prepare for climatic changes in the Great Lakes region and discussed the challenges posed by frequent heavy rainfall events. He emphasized the urgency in finding solutions for water management, addressing impervious surfaces, and enhancing the resilience of buildings and infrastructure against climate-related impacts.

Mr. Suder echoed the concerns about increasing frequency of intense rain events and highlighted the necessity of implementing pervious surfaces and reevaluating impervious surface regulations. He emphasized the significance of addressing water management and impervious surface challenges in the proposed zoning code.

Director Blackford emphasized the need for balance, stating that Gahanna's current zoning code had overly generous allowances for impervious surfaces, particularly in industrial areas. He stressed the importance of being prudent and mindful in zoning regulations, indicating that the proposed code would introduce maximum limits in areas where historically there were none. The goal was to balance business ease with smart urban planning to ensure a sustainable and resilient future for Gahanna.

Council President Renner raised a concern about the resiliency aspect, questioning whether the consideration of building designs and materials that can adapt to climate changes was part of the zoning code discussion.

Mr. Suder responded, stating that detailed discussions about building designs, materials, and adaptation strategies concerning climate changes hadn't been extensively explored at that point.

Director Blackford acknowledged the complexity of integrating resiliency into

building codes, citing various regulations and standards. He mentioned the lack of consistency in materials in certain areas of Gahanna, apart from Creekside. Director Blackford highlighted the interconnected nature of building codes and mentioned the need to navigate state-level regulations while considering local goals for climate adaptation. The conversation indicated a willingness to explore materials that could contribute to building resiliency while being mindful of existing codes and standards.

Mr. Shapaka, Planning Commission Chair, noted the life cycle of buildings, highlighting the contrast between Europe's 100-year life cycle and the relatively transient nature of structures in Gahanna, with a typical life cycle of 25 years. He expressed concerns about the lack of longevity in the city's constructions and emphasized the need to address this issue, considering it a matter related to building codes.

Councilmember Bowers echoed Mr. Shapaka's concerns, emphasizing the short life cycle of many new buildings, which, in her view, was a cause for worry. She acknowledged that this topic might exceed the current conversation's scope but emphasized its significance.

Mr. Shapaka continued the discussion, emphasizing the potential for Gahanna to set a precedent in adopting longer-lasting building practices. He highlighted the positive impact such a change could have on the city's character and residents' quality of life. However, he recognized that this topic was beyond the immediate scope of the discussion.

Mr. Suder contributed to the conversation, referencing Creekside as an example where more permanent natural materials were being considered. He specifically mentioned the use of such materials for the exterior, contrasting them with synthetic or vinyl alternatives. His comments indicated an awareness of the importance of choosing enduring materials in the construction process. Mr. Shapaka noted he did not see any solar panels on the roofs in this area.

Incentivizing Sustainable Development in Gahanna:

Mr. Greenberg, Planning Commission, brought attention to the concept of roof gardens on buildings, which could help retain water and prevent runoff. He acknowledged the challenge of incentivizing developers to adopt such practices, emphasizing their potential benefits in minimizing water runoff and impervious surfaces.

Mr. Suder responded, noting that developers typically respond well to incentives. He mentioned that developers often prefer additional stories, extra units, or reduced parking requirements as incentives. He highlighted the importance of striking a balance between incentives and mandates, as different communities have varying preferences in this regard.

Mr. Greenberg concurred, concluding there were trades that could be involved.

Mr. Suder explained the approaches of incentives and mandates in different communities. He emphasized that while mandates exist in some places, most communities' approach seemed more inclined toward incentives.

Councilmember Bowers inquired about tying financial incentives to sustainable practices. Mr. Suder confirmed that financial incentives, such as tax abatements, could indeed be linked to sustainable initiatives, especially in the context of public-private partnerships. His response underscored the feasibility of aligning financial benefits with environmentally conscious development efforts.

Mr. Greenberg asked about the idea of requiring a sustainability plan for properties as a condition for development approval.

Mr. Suder offered that if the city were to mandate a sustainability plan, it could be exchanged for other incentives.

Director Blackford clarified the legal aspects, noting that development agreements offered a suitable framework for incorporating sustainability measures. He pointed out that development agreements, distinct from typical zoning actions, could accommodate agreements involving financial contributions or incentives.

Mr. Suder concurred, explaining that within development agreements, the city could offer incentives, such as tax abatements or direct investments, to encourage sustainable practices. He emphasized the distinction between contractual agreements and zoning regulations, allowing for specific negotiated terms within development agreements.

Mayor Jadwin highlighted the distinction between policy-driven and code-driven initiatives.

Councilmember Bowers suggested the possibility of integrating sustainability measures through a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) ordinance. Mayor Jadwin clarified that her response was in reference to the current discussion centered on the zoning code.

Mr. Suder elaborated on specific zoning-related measures, mentioning that zoning regulations could include automatic incentives for developers implementing certain sustainable practices. For instance, providing a percentage of affordable housing units could grant developers additional units as an automatic incentive within the zoning code. However, he reiterated the need for development agreements for more complex incentives involving direct city participation or financial investments.

Addressing Traffic Congestion and Encouraging Multi-Modal Transportation:

Councilmember Angelou expressed concerns about the increasing traffic congestion in the community, particularly along major roads like Johnstown Road. She emphasized the need to address this issue, foreseeing potential challenges due to the ongoing growth and development in the area.

Mr. Suder acknowledged the impact of public and private realms on each other and stressed the importance of collaboration between the city, transportation authorities, and developers. He discussed the possibility of softening the impact of transportation arteries by implementing land-use strategies. He mentioned concepts like creating Greenways and corridor villages to provide walkable alternatives along busy corridors, offering solutions to mitigate traffic-related challenges.

Director Blackford highlighted the benefit of incorporating mixed-use developments. By introducing a variety of uses within an area, the number of daily vehicular trips can be reduced. He emphasized that mixing different types of establishments lessens the dependency on cars, which could help alleviate the burden on existing infrastructure.

Mr. Suder reiterated the incremental nature of these changes, emphasizing that these modifications might take time to yield visible effects. He underscored the importance of setting the regulatory foundation aligned with the city's vision, even if the outcomes are not immediate.

Mayor Jadwin emphasized the interconnection of multiple plans and codes within the city's development strategy. She pointed out the collaboration between the zoning code, active transportation plan, and thoroughfare plan. She highlighted the need to understand how these elements align and complement each other, indicating that a comprehensive strategy would be necessary to address traffic congestion effectively. Mr. Suder concurred with Mayor Jadwin, confirming the significance of these interconnected plans and codes.

Olde Gahanna Density:

Mr. Shapaka, Planning Commission Chair, inquired about potential changes in downtown Gahanna's density outlined in the proposed code.

Director Blackford clarified that there were no proposed changes in the downtown density regulations. He explained that the Olde Gahanna mixed-use area, particularly around Mill Street and Granville Street, was designed to be developer friendly. This zone allowed for flexible development, lacking traditional height restrictions, and permitting a mix of residential and commercial uses. Additionally, it offered reduced setbacks and parking requirements, promoting density. Director Blackford emphasized that the existing zoning had received positive feedback from the development community and aligned with the community's vision for increased density and mixed-use development in the Olde Gahanna area. The proposed changes aimed to maintain this developer-friendly approach and not create impediments to the area's growth and development.

Short-Term Rentals and Their Impact on Housing Market:

Council Vice President Weaver raised a concern regarding short-term rentals and inquired about recent trends and potential recommendations.

Mr. Suder elaborated on the emerging trends in dealing with short-term rentals, highlighting the increasing regulation and restriction of such rentals. He mentioned that the impacts of short-term rentals on existing neighborhoods had led to these regulatory changes. Two common approaches to control short-term rentals include business licensing and zoning restrictions. Mr. Suder noted that some communities have faced challenges in attempting to limit short-term rentals through zoning due to interstate commerce and legal issues.

Councilmember Bowers expressed a broader concern related to the commoditization of housing, particularly the proliferation of single-family rental homes in Central Ohio. She was concerned that such trends could reduce access to home ownership, which is a critical means for middle-class families to build wealth.

Mr. Suder concurred, emphasizing that the dominance of short-term rentals in the market could crowd out home ownership opportunities, drive up prices, and impact the availability of traditional single-family housing.

Mayor Jadwin shared her concerns about the impact of short-term rentals on neighborhood cohesion and the frequent rotation of guests. She asked Mr. Suder if he knew of any smaller municipalities in the Columbus region, similar in size to Gahanna, that have introduced short-term rental legislation.

Mr. Suder mentioned that he needed to check the records but thought that Westerville might have implemented short-term rental legislation. However, there was uncertainty about Westerville's specific regulations.

Councilmember Padova shared that she had recently spoken to a council member from Blue Ash, Ohio, a city with a population of about 12 to 13,000 residents. Blue Ash had reportedly banned short-term rentals, although there were still some issues with unregulated rentals. They were initially concerned about potential legal challenges but had not been sued as of yet.

Mayor Jadwin expressed interest in the concept of business licensing for regulating short-term rentals, considering it a worthy topic for further exploration.

Mr. Suder indicated that regulating the business aspect of short-term rentals was typically easier to manage than addressing property rights, and he mentioned his familiarity with the situation in Blue Ash.

Next Steps and Additional Public Engagement Plans:

Director Blackford acknowledged the time, which was shortly past 8:00 PM. He expressed his intention to be mindful of everyone's time and outlined the next steps and the path forward. He highlighted the need for staff to evaluate the zoning code in light of the discussions and gather additional feedback. Director Blackford reviewed additional upcoming public hearing aspects. He also provided information about upcoming engagement opportunities. These

included the Columbus Business First breakfast, an open house at City Hall, and other events aimed at engaging the business community. He emphasized the need to educate the community about the zoning code's implications for small businesses.

Mayor Jadwin acknowledged the importance of having a draft of the zoning code presented before the end of the year and raised the expectation of public hearings and additional opportunities for public input throughout the process.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Council, President Renner adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m. Planning Commission also adjourned its meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the City Council - Special, this
day of 2023.*

Stephen A. Renner