



City of Othello
Planning Commission Meeting
April 15, 2024
Zuleica Morfin

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Dorow called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Chris Dorow, Brian Gentry, Alma Carmona, Daniela Voorhies, Maria Martinez, Ruth Sawyer

Absent: Kevin Gilbert

Staff: Community Development Director Anne Henning, Building and Planning Secretary Zuleica Morfin

Attendees: Bob Carlson, Sulema Martinez

PUBLIC INPUT

None

MINUTES APPROVAL

March 18, 2024, minutes approved M/S Sawyer/Martinez

BARRIERS TO HOUSING - 525 S 6TH AVE (DUPLEX ON 11,000 SF LOT IN R-2)

The owner of 525 S. 6th Avenue asked about adding on to the existing duplex to create 1 or 2 more units. The lot is 11,220 square feet. However, it is located in the R-2 Zone so the maximum allowed on this lot is 2 units. The lot is not quite large enough to divide into 2 lots, since the minimum lot size in R-2 is 6,000 square feet. When the Planning Commission reviewed the Zoning Map in 2017-2019, they had proposed rezoning some areas from R-2 to R-3, to allow redevelopment, but the Council did not want to change the zoning of existing neighborhoods. However, since that time, the city has done a Housing Needs Analysis and Housing Action Plan, showing that the need for housing is even more urgent than we thought. Chair Chris Dorow said a good place to look was on 4th to 1st and Main St. to Juniper St. where a lot of houses were condemned and now have been replaced with triplexes that blend in well.

Ms. Henning said that it would be hard to change the zoning and the code in this location to make it work. Chair Chris Dorow brought up that there would be a parking issue seeing that they only have one parking spot now. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies asked Ms. Henning how often this has come up. She said not too often where people go through the steps and ask the question and being told no, but in this case the owner was more persistent. Chair Chris Dorow said there were 6 abandoned houses next to 525 S. 6th Ave. and he didn't see anything wrong with them getting turned into something else. He also said if this was something good for the future of Othello, they should think about upzoning some of the places.

Chair Chris Dorow asked commissioners what their thought on this was. Commissioner Brian Gentry said he personally didn't have a problem with it if it's big enough and there was parking. Commissioner Alma Carmona said she was ok with whatever the Planning Commission wanted to do. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies said she understands there's a crisis, but she didn't think the four plex in this area would solve

much. Commissioner Maria Martinez said it was a no for her. Commissioner Ruth Sawyer said it was a no for her as this area was already congested and would cause problems.

Commissioners were willing to take another look at overall Residential zoning, but only if the City Council would be in support of making changes.

SUBDIVISION UPDATE - OMC TITLE 16 - DISCUSSION

When property is divided, it must be done through the subdivision process. Each jurisdiction sets standards based on state requirements. Othello Municipal Code Title 16: Subdivisions is our version of that. This code is in need of a major update. There are many provisions that don't match up to current practice or actually conflict with other sections of the code. In addition, the Title is long, confusing, and overly complicated. Most sections of the Title have not been updated since initial adoption in 1995. The intent of updating the Subdivision Title is to streamline the process, organize it better, make it easier to understand, and eliminate discrepancies. This Title is complicated to work on because the chapters are so interrelated, requiring a lot of time and effort by both staff and the Commission to understand the issues and try to solve them in the best way possible.

Commissioner Alma Carmona read minutes from the past where it said the planning commission was in favor of a grid network for streets and no dead ends but she didn't remember that ever being the case. Chair Chris Dorow said he was more in the neighborhood design but there were aspects of the grid design that he liked for consistency. He said the grid would make it easier for walking. Commissioner Ruth Sawyer preferred a neighborhood design where you get to know your neighbor. She said she grew up in a neighborhood with a cul-de sac and all the kids got to know each other and families supported each other. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies said she liked the neighborhood design. Commissioner Brian Gentry said he saw pros and cons to both sides. He does like the alley because it comes in handy and in most neighborhoods, there is no alley. Commissioner Alma Carmona said she lived in a house where there was an alley and at night that alley was scary to her. She would wake up in the morning calling the cops because someone was asleep in their car in the alley. Commissioner Brian Gentry felt that if they went away from alleys, they would be limiting ADUs in the future because an alley is an access point for an ADU. Commissioner Maria Martinez said the alleys were nice and, in a neighborhood, you get a lot of complaints such as your dog barking because everyone is just too close. Commissioner Alma Carmona mentioned how she could see into her neighbor's house and even then, she still preferred that over an alley. Chair Chris Dorow talked about how there are limited entries in a neighborhood design as well as exits making it harder for pedestrian traffic.

Chair Chris Dorow asked Ms. Henning if they had to commit to a grid or a neighborhood design. Ms. Henning said the previous direction was to not have dead ends but if the Commission wants to allow cul-de sacs then that would be a change that would have to be reflected in the code. She wanted Commissioners to be aware that dead ends can also cause problems with utilities, such as dead-end water mains. Chair Chris Dorow said if the developer wanted to do a grid design they'd have to put some sort of traffic safety calming. Ms. Henning said that in the draft they had been working on, they would have to limit the length of a block, every 600 feet would need a pedestrian path with raised sidewalks, and require curves to slow down traffic. Commissioners looked at a map of Othello to see where the last developed alleys were which were over on 3rd and 4th Ave. Commissioner Brian Gentry said alley access was a selling point for a house.

Commissioner Brian Gentry brought up street parking and how that has been the biggest negative when it comes to selling. He said over on East Lilac Place there is no street parking and nowhere for guests to

park. Another area that came up was over on North Larkspur Lane where there was also no street parking, and the roads are narrow. Commissioner Alma Carmona asked if the Planning commissioners felt that if what they required for parking was adequate to address cul-de sac issues. The Planning Commission agrees that the current parking requirements are adequate.

Chair Chris Dorow said he doesn't like hearing developers say that they don't like to build in Othello because it is too restrictive, so he likes to give a little more freedom when it comes to developing.

The Open Space chapter says that when someone develops a residential subdivision, they must dedicate 5% of the land for a park or they must pay a fee in lieu of that dedication if they don't want to dedicate land. Ms. Henning said it would be easier to set a flat fee. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies was in favor of open space, so she would like the fee to be a lot higher to encourage the developer to dedicate land instead of paying the fee.

Commissioners discussed Ochoa's land across from Wal-Mart. They felt it would make a good area for a park in the future. When development is proposed, Commissioners would like to see some land set aside for a park in the middle. Or maybe the City could buy park property, and then developers reimburse the City as they build developments that need open space.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm. Next meeting is Monday, June 17, 2024.

Alma Carmona

~~Chris Dorow, Chair~~
Alma Carmona

Date: 07/15/2024

Zuleica Morfin

Zuleica Morfin, Building and Planning Secretary

Date: 7/15/2024