

High Point City Government 101

Planning in High Point: How the Future is Determined

In this exercise, you will be examining a particular site and its potential development from the perspective of either the developer, the adjacent property owners, the Planning and Zoning Commission, or the City Council. A brief description of each group follows to help you better understand their role in the development process. When answering your assigned questions, keep in mind that your group should evaluate any potential development based on both existing and future development patterns. After each group has considered the proposal from its own perspective, the class will reconvene and we will discuss how these different interests are reflected in the land use planning and zoning decisions for the City of High Point.

Scenario

A site located at the southeast corner of Clinard Farms Road and Barrow Road is being considered for annexation into the city and initial city zoning. As you will recall from your homework assignment, this site is located in the city's airport overlay district, a water supply watershed, and is designated for mixed use development on the city's adopted Land Use Plan Map. As noted in our land use policies, mixed use development combines a variety of residential and non-residential uses on one site, rather than typical development that allows only one type of use for each individual site. Given these factors a proposed mixed use development for our site may include a combination of higher density residential uses (townhomes, apartments, condominiums) with some type of commercial component to serve both the new residential units and surrounding area.

Developer

The developer is the person or entity that coordinates changing the site from its existing use to one or more other preferred uses. The developer is responsible for all aspects of the development process, from getting appropriate approvals for the intended plans to ensuring the final development is built in a way that satisfies all legal requirements (such as zoning requirements) while meeting the needs of the current and eventual owners of the property. It is important to remember that developers, as private businesspersons, must have the expectation for some level of profit to even consider a project.

The developer is generally familiar with local development policies and regulations and typically presents the proposed development to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council for approval and acts as the point of contact for adjacent property owners. The developer's main role is to make certain the proposed development is viable and to anticipate potential issues that must be addressed prior to approval. In many cases developers do not actually own the property they are developing and typically focus on readying a site for development (getting proper authorization and installing streets and utilities) for eventual completion by other unassociated builders. Planning staff typically meets with developers prior to any public meetings to identify major site issues and suggest ways the development proposal can best meet established regulations and policies.

Questions

1. As the developer, what is your primary goal for this site?
(What do you want to accomplish? What do you think is an appropriate development proposal?)
2. What types of things need to be considered in reaching that goal?
(Review the surrounding area zoning, land use plan classifications, airport overlay district, watershed overlay districts, uses around the site, and road plans.)
3. What do you think the possible issues, concerns or roadblocks may be to developing this site?
(Consider what other groups might think and your own perspective.)
4. How might you address the possible issues, concerns or roadblocks?

Surrounding Property Owners

These persons own (solely or with others) the property directly adjacent to or within the general vicinity of our proposed development site. They also could include other persons with a vested concern in more far reaching impacts (ex. traffic, poorer water quality, crowded schools) on their property from development at this site. These property owners will range from people actually residing on these adjacent or nearby properties to those that do not even live in High Point. Ultimately property owners are interested in projects that are “good neighbors.” Property owners are able to formally present issues and concerns during public hearings before the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council, and can file protest petitions challenging development proposals, which require a higher vote of Council for approval.

Though the current uses for the adjacent properties around this site are primarily single family residences on individual lots, factors such as future land use designations and the airport overlay district (covered in your homework assignment) suggest that at least some of these adjacent properties will be eventually be converted to industrial and commercial uses. Planning staff will provide surrounding property owners with relevant information on a proposed development, note any issues and concerns, and work with developers and property owners to address these issues prior to public hearings when possible.

Questions

1. As the surrounding neighbors, what is your primary goal for this site?
(What do you desire/not desire for this site? Consider what is in and around the area.)
2. What types of things need to be considered in reaching that goal?
(Review the surrounding area zoning, land use plan classifications, airport overlay district, watershed overlay districts, uses around the site, and road plans.)
3. What are your greatest concerns regarding the development of the site?
4. How would you address those concerns?

Planning and Zoning Commission

The Planning and Zoning Commission is a nine-member citizen board appointed by City Council that includes six ward representatives, two at-large representatives, and one member from the city's extraterritorial jurisdiction, which includes areas just outside the city limits where the city regulates development activity. The Planning and Zoning Commission is typically the first time where the points of view of the developer and surrounding property owners are fully known to the public, with the Commission helping everyone to key in on major issues to be considered and resolved either during the meeting or by City Council.

The primary role of the Planning and Zoning Commission is to examine development requests using goals, objectives and policies of the Land Use Plan and regulations of the city's Development Ordinance and based on comments from the public, provide recommendations to City Council on these development requests. Planning staff, through the staff reports described in the City Council group description above, provides all relevant information on the development, including any identified concerns and proposed options to address these concerns.

Questions

1. As the Planning and Zoning Commission, what is your primary goal for this site?
2. What types of things need to be considered in reaching that goal?
(Review the surrounding area zoning, land use plan classifications, airport overlay district, watershed overlay districts, uses around the site, and road plans.)
3. What kind of information do you need from the developer and neighbors in order to evaluate and make a recommendation to City Council on a proposal for the site?
4. What may be the main issues of consideration related to developing the site?

City Council

High Point's City Council is a nine-member elected body with six ward representatives, two at-large representatives and the mayor. Collectively, this body represents the interests of the entire community and must balance the needs of the larger community with those of individual property owners. In balancing the needs of the community and those of individual property owners, City Council must often address competing concerns. (ex. encouraging economic development while protecting environmentally sensitive areas or allowing redevelopment that does not negatively impact existing neighborhoods)

City Council, as the elected legislative body for the city, establishes city policy and approves annexations and zoning designations that determine how development occurs, along with any additional requirements that must be met to address any identified issues or concerns. Planning staff provides key information through staff reports outlining items such as site characteristics, development history, relevant policies and regulations, surrounding development trends and the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendations for appropriate action.

Questions

1. As the City Council, what is your primary goal for this site?
(Remember City Council represents the interests of the entire community.)
2. What types of things need to be considered in reaching that goal?
(Consider the interests of all groups. Review the surrounding area zoning, land use plan classifications, airport overlay district, watershed overlay districts, uses around the site, and road plans.)
3. In representing the interests of the entire community, how might this affect the way you view development on the site?
(Consider the interests of all groups and community policies.)
4. As the final decision-maker for approving development of this site, what may be the main influencing factors in that decision?
(What do you think the key elements are for a successful project?)