



# CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

## Joint City Council, Planning Commission, and HRA Work Session

### April 12, 2022

<b>CALL TO ORDER</b>
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The work session was called to order by Mayor Regan Gonzalez at 6:00 p.m. in the Bartholomew Room.

Council Members Present: Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor; Mary Supple; Simon Trautmann (6:05 p.m.); Sean Hayford O'leary; and Ben Whalen

Council Members Absent: None.

Planning Commission Members Present: James Rudolph, Chair; Brett Stursa; Brendan Kennealy; and Ben Surma

Planning Commission Members Absent: Kathryn Quam and Eddie Holmwig-Johnson

HRA Members Present: Mary Supple, President; Maria Regan Gonzalez; Lee Ohnesorge; and Gordon Hanson (not yet confirmed).

HRA Members Absent: Erin Vrieze Daniels

Staff Present: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Melissa Poehlman, Community Development Director; Sack Thongvanh, Assistant City Manager; Joe Powers, City Engineer; Ben Manibog, Transportation Engineer; Chris Swanson, Management Analyst; and Kari Sinning, City Clerk

Others Present: Rich Dippolito and Lauren Robinson, Brixmor Property Group

<b>ITEM #1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION OF REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR THE HUB SHOPPING CENTER BY REPRESENTATIVES OF BRIXMOR PROPERTY GROUP</b>
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City Manager Rodriguez stated the agenda item is informational and to gather initial feedback on the proposed plans and then introduced Community Development Director Poehlman. Director Poehlman then turned the meeting over to Rich Dippolito from Brixmor Property Group.

Rich Dippolito detailed the HUB area currently and the proposed plan that includes residential and the current tenants that have longer leases. The plan focuses on creating greenspaces and allowing for walk-up restaurants. Dippolito explained that they would be asking for Tax Increment Financing to help with the funding for the development.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez stated that the leaders from Partnership Academy were present and contact information should be shared to improve both developments.

Council Member Hayford Oleary expressed his excitement for the development plans however the proposed plans brought up some concerns such as the potential for a large vacancy in the main retailer in the future, the location of the residential component in reference to public transportation along Nicollet, many drive-thru sites along 66<sup>th</sup> Street, and that there is only one north-south connection instead of two that would follow the Comp Plan. He urged the developers to look further into the future and bring more pedestrian friendly ideas.

Chair Rudolph was impressed with the proposed plans and looks forward to the redevelopment of the historic area.

Council Member Whalen echoed Council Member Hayford Oleary's comments and expressed additional concerns for the underutilization of the space with several single story buildings instead of residential above retail spaces and the large size of parking available. He was excited about outdoor spaces and residential space but stated that there is more opportunity to build up instead of out. Dippolito explained that they are retail developer and do not know much about residential developments.

Council Member Supple thanked them for bringing the proposed plans and expressed curiosity about the smaller, locally owned retail tenants. Dippolito stated that the proposed plan highlighted retailers that had long-term leases and if those small business owners would like to extend their leases they would be happy to talk with them.

Commissioner Stursa expressed gratitude for the proposed plans but asked the developers to focus more on pedestrian/people orientation versus vehicle. She also asked about the affordability of the residential housing. Dippolito stated that they are working with their residential partners and the goal is to have an affordability aspect.

Commissioner Surma expressed concern for accessibility for public transit users and brought up the idea of moving the Walgreens closer to the public transit stop along Nicollet. Commissioner Surma also asked if the plans would alter the curb lines. Dippolito stated that there is no plan to change the curb lines and appreciated the comment about the pharmacy having access to those bus stops.

Commissioner Hanson was excited for grocery store option and asked about the affordability of lease rates for smaller, locally-owned retail shops. He stated that he would support the use of higher density of the site to provide more residential housing. He also commented that this would be a great opportunity for their company to expand their expertise and push the boundaries of what they are capable of.

Dippolito asked what density would be appropriate for this site. Director Poehlman stated that the Comp Plan has a this site for a high density of about 100 to 150 units per acre and the general allowance for height would be around six stories but there is flexibility since this is a planned unit

development. Chair Rudolph brought up that a residential building the size of City Bella would be a good fit for this site. Council Member Hayford Oleary agreed with Chair Rudolph and added that there has been push to build apartment buildings at the Hub from residents.

Council Member Trautmann expressed gratitude for the discussion of the proposed plans and expressed concern for the amount of drive-thru buildings and limited green spaces for the community. He encouraged Bixmor to think about the future that would keep people living, working, and shopping in Richfield.

Commissioner Kennealy was fortunate to have this discussion and stated that they should focus on transportation by car being the least attractive option. Commissioner Kennealy also expressed excitement and support for the increased density and height.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez stated that the proposed plans are good however we are interested to be creative to make this more functional for the community and expressed that, as a part of Downtown Richfield, this site is very important for the community and the revitalization of this would be multi-generational. She mentioned partnering with Holy Angels and Partnership Academy to benefit our entire community. She also asked about when they could share the details of who the grocery retailer would be. Dippolito stated that they would not be able to disclose that information until they are allowed but once they are able to they will let the City know.

Council Member Whalen asked about the possibility of doing a multi-level grocery and also asked Brixmor to keep in mind the redevelopment and the residents of and along 65<sup>th</sup> Street that might not want to look at the back of buildings. He also stated that an unattractive parking structure would be better than so much of the area being surface parking and would allow for more density much like the areas of 50<sup>th</sup> and France.

Council Member Hayford Oleary appreciated how ambitious the proposed plans are and expressed hope that they would go further with the opportunities. He also expressed delight about the quick timeframe they stated to redevelop the site but would like to see the project take longer and get done right than be rushed.

Director Poehlman stated the next steps would be for Brixmor to digest the feedback from tonight's work session and to work with the City to create a sketch plan. She also stated that staff would keep Council and Commissioners informed as the process moves forward.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez thanked everyone for the discussion.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The work session was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:41 p.m.

Date Approved: April 26, 2022



Kari Sinning  
City Clerk



Mary B. Supple, Mayor Pro Tempore



Katie Rodriguez  
City Manager