

From Statesman

Bastrop P & Z Commission Passes Form-based Code Plan

by Debbie Moore | Mar. 5, 2015

What began with the passage of a resolution by the Bastrop Planning and Zoning Commission two years ago culminated on Feb. 26 with passage of the document setting out recommendations for a zoning change from use-based to form-based.

After more than 90 minutes of consideration, the plan document passed unanimously. A first reading and public hearing will be held at the Bastrop City Council meeting on March 10 beginning at 6:30 p.m. in City Hall. If the Council irons out the details at the March 10 meeting, it could pass the new zoning regulations at its March 24 meeting.

What would that mean to city residents? There will be no change to existing homes, commercial buildings or businesses. There will be no change required should the current owner sell a home, commercial building, or business as long as the new owner makes no change to the structure or to the type of business in operation when purchased.

Any change comes into play for new construction, whether it is on an empty lot, known as “in-fill,” or when an existing structure is removed and a new one built. In those instances, the “form” or look of the new construction would be the primary consideration. The form of the new building will vary by location.

The change will only apply to an area roughly bounded on the north by Hawthorne Street, to the east by Texas 95, to the south by College Street and Texas 71, and to the west by the Colorado River.

The form-based plan is being developed based on the look of current neighborhoods and business corridors. Setbacks, height requirements and limitations are such that any new construction would essentially be required to keep the current look and feel of the area.

There are restrictions on permitted businesses in each of the zones.

For example, height limitations along Texas 95 are five stories or 60 feet, while construction in neighborhoods is limited to 2 ½ stories or 35 feet. That is because the decision was made that construction of hotels near the Bastrop Convention Center and proposed Lost Pines Art Center should be encouraged. Buildings of that height would not be allowed in neighborhoods.

Before approval, commission members, the public and Form-Based Code Task Force Members continued to scour the document with a fine-tooth comb. At one point, Commissioner Brian Whitten even pointed out that the word “less”



Consultant Rob Parsons, left, and Melissa McCollum speak before the Planning and Zoning Commission while Nancy Wood takes notes on required changes to zoning document at a meeting last week.

should be changed to “fewer.”

The Form-Based Code Task Force is composed of Herb Goldsmith, Chair, City Manager Mike Talbot, Lisa Patterson, John Koslowske, Shawn Pletsch, Dan Hays-Clark, Bill Peterson, and Councilmember Kay Garcia McAnally. The group has held frequent meetings since being named more than a year ago and has incorporated public input they received.

Planning and Zoning Commission members are Lisa Patterson, Chair, Christy Kossier, Kristi Koch, Brian Whitten, Richard Kindred, Tish Winston, David Bragg, Connie Schroeder, and Bill Ennis.