



NORTH BRANCH

—Minnesota—

Steve Cich
Chair

Nathan Ehalt
Commissioner

Ross Otto
Commissioner

Gary Schaefer
Commissioner

Open
Commissioner

**PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, JULY 1, 2025 @ 6:30 PM
CITY HALL, 6408 ELM STREET, NORTH
BRANCH, MN 55056**

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTH BRANCH IN THE COUNTY OF CHISAGO AND IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, July 1, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Steve Cich called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner Gary Schaefer, Commissioner Steve Cich, Commissioner Ross Otto,
Commissioner Nate Ehalt

Absent:

Remote:

Others Present:

Notes:

4. AGENDA APPROVAL

a. Approve Agenda

ACTION

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of June 3, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

ACTION

RESULT: Passed

MOVER: Nate Ehalt

SECONDER: Ross Otto

AYES: None

ABSENT:

NOTES:

7. STAFF REPORTS

- a. Public Hearing to consider a conditional use permit to allow for multiple principal buildings on one parcel for the Main Street Apartments ACTION

The discussion was held regarding the allowance of four multiple principal buildings on one parcel. The discussion was not to approve the design standpoint versus what's currently in code, just approving the allowance for multiple principal buildings on this parcel. Chair Steve Cich requested that the Community Development Director, Nate Sondrol, show the Council what had changed with the siding, etc. Director Sondrol stated that the developer had provided plans to include LP horizontal versus the prior vertical steel. The developer also provided a landscaping plan that included 39 rees, plus the 8 existing along the east side, which would exceed the requirements.

Commissioner Shaefer mentioned that on page 12, there are 10 things that the Council should look at to grant a conditional use permit. He felt that it was positive on all of them. Commissioner Ehalt had a question about utilities, as it was mentioned that the elevations might not necessarily be conducive. Commissioner Ehalt wondered if that changes because of the fact that the Council is looking at four structures versus one, and if so, would there be a need, or is that the need for a lift station at all? Director Sondrol replied that the applicant had modified their plan to have services from the north and south streets to address that.

Commissioner Ehalt agreed with Commissioner Shaefer that it does make a lot more sense to have additional structures to be able to limit some of that height, as well as being able to make sure it matches a little bit more with the character of that the east end of the downtown area and the overall residential area that it enters into. Commissioner Ehalt asked for clarification on the architectural appearance and who decides that, and so, if there is a variance from the existing code, is that up to staff to be able to provide some flexibility within that, or how has it typically been done within the City? Director Sondrol replied that a modification of the design standards would require an approval of a variance and would go through the public hearing process.

Commissioner Otto noted that the current facade does not meet the code and a variance approval would be required. Director Sondrol explained that the site is in the zone one for building facade materials that require 65% class one and 35% class two materials. He note that materials being proposed are permitted materials in class one and class two but did not meet the percentage requirements for the class one, noting LP or hardie board are considered class two materials in city code. He added that the code only states that areas that are not visible from the streets would not need to meet the percentages, but it would need to be those materials.

Tommy Foster spoke saying if we do have to do variance, what I'd like to do is what's facing south on 95 maybe I would do all brick on the one side of the two South buildings and then not break on the other ones, and just do like on the side streets, and then maybe still do it on the entrance, on another on the other side, try to advertise to all of the stone on the south two buildings and then minimal stone on the north two buildings, if we could do that, still with the same color scheme, but maybe just go like around that entrance. He noted, that the stone was about a \$90,000 upgrade per building.

or about \$11,300 a unit, which is about \$100 a month. He noted he is trying to get the project to work. He noted that the site also requires soil corrections which and a additional sanitary service from Main Street the cost per unit continue to increase. Foster discussed a variety of facade configurations for the building with the commission.

Commissioner Otto said what is visual from 95 is the primary concern and the desire to have the buildings blend in with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Meacham asked for clarification on both the commission to city staff that if code allows four separate buildings, does the code allow for the 65% and 35% breakup, to be between the four buildings and not on each individual building. Director Sondrol said that the city code requires anything visible from a street to meet to percentages.

Motion by Cich to recommend approval of the conditional use permit to allow for multiple principle buildings on one parcel for the Main Street Apartments subject to the findings of fact in the packet. Seconded by Otto. All voted AYE. Motion carried.

RESULT: Passed
MOVER: Steve Cich
SECONDER: Ross Otto
AYES: Gary Schaefer, Steve Cich, Ross Otto, Nate Ehalt
ABSENT:
NOTES:

8. STAFF REPORTS

INFO

a. Design Standards

City Planner Ryan Saltis provided an overview of staff research on design standards noting this has come up a couple times between the EDA, Planning Commission and the City Council noting the he purpose of this is to promote development to be competitive with surrounding communities, and then also to maintain the aesthetics and tax base. He noted the goal of the city is to be business-focused and provided a comparison of surrounding communities to North Branch.

He informed the commission that the city has a map that determines standard design standard zones. noting there are three zones within the city. IHe added that itt's location-based, meaning that, dependent on where it is, if it's on Main Street, CBD district, or if it's along 35 then it would kind of determine what zone they're in, and then the classes of materials would be reflective of that. Zone one is for primary corridors. which included the I35 corridor and Main Street, and similar locations, noting this would be the most restrictive, and then it kind of goes down to zone two, and then zone three would be the least restrictive. He noted zone three is primarily the industrial park. He asked the commission if the map needed to be amended? Saltis provided an overview of the different communities noting percentages, range from 50% to 75% high-quality materials for street-facing facades. North Branch is at 65% so we're kind of falling on the higher end of that, and then prohibitive materials that are pretty consistent with surrounding communities. Architectural detailing kind of got into that as well. Cohesive appearance variation, material color, and then other cities kind of do that as well, with offsets for the length,

Director Sondrol added that the EDA is looking to encourage and promote development. He discussed insulated metal panel buildings as a material type, noting that they have a similar appearance of a concrete building from viewing from the interstate. Commissioner Ehalt stated from the standpoint of an industrial park, we should probably look at where that is and whether that falls within class one, class two or class three and felt that it should almost be a standalone district. Director Sondrol noted that several communities have their design standards based on zoning districts instead of having an overall zone map.

The City Council will be holding a public input meeting on Tuesday, July 15, at the North Branch Middle School FTLA conference room. Feedback was shared from the Comprehensive Plan Meeting on 06/17/25. The City is looking for continued discussion and input from the commission on the

10. ~~ADJOURNMENT~~ Comprehensive Plan Commission as it relates to land use, housing, and transportation.

Commissioner Ehalt asked if there was any year established yet by the DOT as it relates to a possible interchange. City Administrator Matthew Hill explained that the City has been bringing it to the State for a couple of different opportunities. This year the City asked for design and property acquisition and engineering, so to purchase the fourth leg that we currently don't own, do the engineering of the infrastructure, of the actual interchange itself, and then the design phase of doing the bypass connecting in Isanti County and over to highway 95 on the east side of town. Our current ask is about \$4 million for that, and once we get that in place, and we get that commitment from the State of Minnesota, then we will be able to incorporate the other partners. City Administrator Hill thought it would probably take five years before receiving funding. At that point, we would get the engineering and design phase completed, then get on the schedule with MnDOT and then the Federal government. It could be a 20-year project.

9. NEXT MEETING - August 5, 2025 - 6:30 PM

a. Upcoming Agenda Items

Upcoming Agenda items for future meetings include Interim Use Permits with home businesses. What is the process, and what conditions or rules need to be enforced? Discussion needs to be held regarding what kind of business it is, what kind of parking is there, is it okay in a residential area, or what kind of traffic will this bring to the neighborhood?

Community Development Director Sondrol mentioned that the city has received an inquiry for a trucking/hauling business in a business zoning district noting there are some questions about the design standards. This is something that will be coming forward. Another item that will be coming up for discussion is that the City has had some inquiries regarding a processing facility with a retail store on land that's zoned commercial.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:13PM.

- RESULT:** Passed
- MOVER:** Steve Cich
- SECONDER:** Nate Ehalt
- AYES:** Gary Schaefer, Steve Cich, Ross Otto, Nate Ehalt
- ABSENT:**
- NOTES:**

