



Village of Stockbridge  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**JANUARY 23, 2025**  
**TOWNHALL MEETING MINUTES**  
118 N. Center Street ~ 517 - 851 - 7435

Attendees : Maya Baker Planner from McKenna, Jill Ogden Village President, P.C. :Jennifer Conant, P.C. : Laura Loomis , P.C.: Amy Good ,P.C.: Chair Daryl Anderson .

Audience: There were Three People in the audience

Overview

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the zoning ordinance update process, including discussions on residential and commercial zoning, accessory dwelling units, and the impact on local businesses. It outlines the current regulations, challenges, and proposed changes to improve compliance and support community development. The document also consolidates action items to guide future steps in the zoning ordinance update.

## Introduction

- The village has contracted a team to update the zoning ordinance through a state-provided grant.
- The meeting agenda includes a brief background on zoning ordinances, tasks, and schedules, followed by a discussion on three main topic areas.

## Background on Zoning Ordinance

### Planning and Zoning Essentials

- The process is conducted through the Planning Commission, enabled by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act.
- The zoning ordinance is adopted by the local authority, in this case, the Village Board.

### Relationship Between Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance

- The zoning ordinance must be supported by a master plan, which was updated in May of the previous year.
- The master plan includes community data, policies, objectives, a future land use map, and a zoning plan.
- The master plan serves as a guide for future actions but is not mandatory for the village to follow.

### Purpose of the Zoning Ordinance

- The zoning ordinance serves as the legal backbone of the village's land use authority.
- Its intent is to protect public health, safety, and welfare, ensuring orderly development and growth.
- It divides the municipality into zones and regulates aspects such as building placement, size, height, design, parking, and landscaping.

## Zoning Ordinance Update Process

## **Current Progress**

- The project has been kicked off with a work plan, analysis, and zoning diagnostic of the existing ordinance.
- An outline of the new ordinance has been drafted, focusing on making it more understandable and streamlined.

## **Public Engagement**

- A meeting with the Planning Commission and Village Council was held in late October.
- Today's town hall meeting is part of the public engagement process.
- The zoning ordinance will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and Village Board multiple times before adoption.

## **Next Steps**

- Work on less controversial sections of the zoning ordinance is ongoing.
- A first draft will be provided to the Planning Commission and village staff for review.
- A public hearing will be held before any changes are made, followed by recommendations from the Planning Commission and adoption by the Village Council.

## **Discussion Topics**

### **Impact on Homeowners and Residential Areas**

- Discussion on how zoning standards affect single-family homeowners.
- Considerations include building placement, design, and compliance with zoning regulations.

### **Impact on Local Business Owners**

- Focus on existing local businesses and their compliance with the zoning ordinance.
- Ensuring business owners understand the extent of compliance required.

### **Impact on New Development**

- Discussion on how zoning standards affect new developments at the village's edge.
- Considerations on the village's influence over development and enforcement of goals.

## **Residential Zoning and Regulations**

### **Current Regulations**

- **Lot Size and Setbacks:**
  - Minimum lot size in R1 single-family village residential areas is 8,712 square feet.
  - Setbacks include 25 feet in the front, 10 feet on either side, and 35 feet in the rear.
  - Building coverage is regulated to ensure compliance with dimensional regulations.

### **Duplexes in Single-Family Districts**

- **Current Situation:**
  - Duplexes are not currently permitted in single-family zoning districts.

- A duplex is defined as a house with two complete dwelling units, each with separate entrances and facilities.
- There is a trend of homes being converted into duplexes without proper permits, indicating a demand for such housing.
- **Discussion Points:**
  - **Enforcement Challenges:** It's difficult to enforce the prohibition of duplexes without providing a legal pathway for their creation.
  - **Potential Regulations:** Consider allowing duplexes with specific regulations to minimize neighborhood impact.
  - **Community Concerns:**
    - Parking issues due to increased vehicles.
    - Maintenance concerns with rental properties.
    - Potential for increased rental properties affecting community character.
- **Considerations for Allowing Duplexes:**
  - Implementing a cap or percentage limit on duplex conversions.
  - Ensuring adequate parking and infrastructure support.
  - Possible requirement for owner-occupied duplexes to maintain property standards.

## Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

### Definition and Current Status

- **Definition:** ADUs, also known as granny flats or mother-in-law units, are small, self-contained living units attached to or within a single-family home.
- **Current Ordinance:** ADUs are not currently addressed in the zoning ordinance, leading to ambiguity in their legality.

### Discussion Points

- **Potential Benefits:**
  - Provides additional housing options.
  - Can be used for family members or as rental units.
- **Regulatory Considerations:**
  - Establishing clear definitions and standards for ADUs.
  - Setting maximum and minimum size limits to differentiate from duplexes.
  - Maintaining existing setbacks and property boundaries.

### Community Feedback

- **Concerns:**
  - Impact on neighborhood character and infrastructure.
  - Potential increase in rental properties and associated issues.
- **Support:**
  - ADUs could provide flexible housing solutions if well-regulated.

## Accessory Dwellings and Zoning Challenges

### Issues with Non-Compliance

- **Non-Compliance Concerns:** Many individuals are constructing additions or accessory dwellings without proper zoning approval, leading to widespread non-compliance.
- **Personal Experience:** An example was shared about a mother-in-law suite added without proper permits, resulting in significant renovation costs due to poor initial construction.

## Demand for Accessory Dwellings

- **Community Needs:** There is a high demand for accessory dwellings, especially for older family members who wish to live independently but close to family.
- **Planning Commission Discussions:** The Township Planning Commission has been addressing the potential for these dwellings to become rental properties, which are currently unregulated.

## Zoning Philosophy and Regulations

- **Zoning as a Philosophy:** Emphasis on creating a family and community-centered zoning philosophy.
- **Existing Ordinances:** Current ordinances address issues like noise and light, ensuring they are enforceable and fit the community's needs.
- **Accessory vs. Second Dwelling:** It's easier to regulate accessory dwellings by prohibiting their rental, distinguishing them from second dwellings.

## Considerations for Duplexes

- **Lot and House Size Requirements:** Discussion on setting minimum lot and house sizes for duplexes to ensure adequate living space.
- **Minimum Dwelling Unit Size:** A suggestion was made for a minimum of 1800 square feet to ensure each unit is at least 900 square feet.

## Zoning and Local Businesses

### Zoning Districts and Business Support

- **Types of Zoning Districts:** The area includes general commercial, highway commercial, and downtown historic districts, each with different implications for business operations.
- **Balancing Property Rights:** The need to balance property rights with creativity and flexibility for local businesses.

### Commercial Zoning Considerations

- **Intensity of Business Operations:** Factors like building size, maximum occupancy, and parking lot size are considered to determine the suitability of businesses in certain areas.
- **Parking Requirements:** Discussion on adjusting parking requirements based on the type of commercial zoning to prevent excessive surface area coverage.

### Impact on Local Business Owners

- **Regulatory Clarity:** Efforts to make zoning regulations clear and processes straightforward for business owners.
- **Adjusting Lot Coverage:** Consideration of adjusting maximum lot coverage to support small businesses operating from homes.

## Business Standards and Regulations

## Standards for Existing Businesses

- **Types of Standards:** Discussion on standards such as parking, lighting, and signage.
  - **Parking:** Considerations on how much parking is required and flexibility in regulations.
  - **Lighting:** Regulations on brightness and requirements for notifying changes.
  - **Signage:** Concerns about size and brightness of signs.

## Home-Based Businesses

- **Home Occupation Ordinance:** Current ordinance requires permits for home-based businesses.
  - **Proposed System:** Suggestion to categorize home occupations by intensity, allowing some without permits.
  - **Permit Requirements:** Discussion on what information is needed for permits and renewal processes.
  - **COVID-19 Impact:** Telecommuting during COVID-19 considered outside the scope of home occupation regulations.

## Zoning and Development

### Residential and Commercial Zoning

- **Zoning Challenges:** Issues with zoning for businesses near residential areas.
  - **Retail Restrictions:** Retail not allowed in residential areas, except for specific cases like yard sales.
- **Development of Vacant Lots:** Discussion on developing large vacant areas while balancing business attraction.
  - **Master Plan:** Provides guidelines but lacks enforcement for residential development.
  - **Cluster Housing Options:** Allows developers to build homes closer together, providing more open space.

### Developer Engagement

- **Approval Process:** Developers must seek site plan approvals before proceeding.
  - **Realtor Guidance:** Realtors should inform potential buyers about zoning and development possibilities.
- **Past Development Challenges:** Previous administrations have made development difficult, impacting housing projects.

## Land Development and Zoning

### Land Use and Zoning Challenges

- **Current Situation:** There is a proposal to split off one acre of land for commercial use at the front, with residential at the back. This aligns with the master plan's preference for commercial use along the reservoir.
- **Challenges:**
  - The minimal undeveloped land within village boundaries complicates development.
  - The water system's limited hookups increase municipal costs.

- Lack of a straightforward development process for mixed-use areas, leading to potential landlocked situations.
- **Master Plan Alignment:** Emphasis on ensuring zoning ordinances match the master plan to facilitate flexible Planned Unit Developments (PUDs).

## Economic Development and Taxation

- **Business Concerns:** High utility costs for water and sewer are driving businesses away, making it cost-prohibitive.
- **Tax Base:** There is a need for developments that generate significant tax revenue. However, legal constraints require a minimum of \$50,000 investment before tax breaks can be offered.
- **Zoning Impact:** Concerns about zoning changes affecting business viability and community priorities.

## Infrastructure and Ordinances

### Sidewalks and Pedestrian Access

- **Current Ordinance:** New builds are required to include sidewalks, even if they don't connect to existing pathways.
- **Past Oversights:** Previous developments like Dollar General and Tractor Supply were allowed without sidewalks, which has since been rectified.
- **Future Considerations:** Ensuring pedestrian access in large parking lots for safety.

### Nonconforming Uses and Structures

- **Nonconforming Structures:** Current rules restrict updates to structures that don't meet setback requirements, leading to disrepair.
- **Proposed Changes:** Allow updates to nonconforming structures as long as they don't encroach further on setbacks.
- **Legally Nonconforming Uses:** Discussion on allowing improvements to legally nonconforming properties to prevent vacancy and disrepair.

## Planning and Next Steps

### Draft and Review Process

- **Draft Timeline:** The first draft of the new zoning ordinances is expected by early March.
- **Review Process:** The plan is to review the draft section by section, with the possibility of adopting it as one large ordinance.
- **Public Notice:** Adoption requires a public hearing with a 15-day notice period, though additional community outreach is recommended.

### Next Meeting

- **Date:** February 6th
- **Agenda:** Review the table of uses and schedule of regulations.

## Action Items

[ ] Distribute copies of the current zoning ordinance's schedule of regulations and permitted uses by district.

[ ] Organize a public hearing for the Planning Commission to review the first draft of the zoning ordinance.

[ ] Ensure village staff and leadership are informed about enforcement procedures and rules.

[ ] Evaluate the possibility of allowing duplexes with specific regulations.

[ ] Consider implementing a cap or percentage limit on duplex conversions.

[ ] Develop clear guidelines and standards for accessory dwelling units in the zoning ordinance.

[ ] Consider setting minimum lot and house sizes for duplexes.

[ ] Review and potentially adjust parking requirements for different commercial zoning areas.

[ ] Clarify zoning regulations and processes for local business owners.

[ ] Review and potentially revise home occupation ordinance to categorize businesses by intensity.

[ ] Consider flexibility in zoning regulations to encourage development while maintaining standards.

[ ] Ensure realtors are informed about zoning regulations to guide potential developers effectively.

[ ] Ensure zoning ordinances align with the master plan for flexible PUDs.

[ ] Address utility cost concerns for businesses.

[ ] Finalize and review the draft zoning ordinances by early March.

[ ] Increase public awareness of zoning changes through multiple channels.

### AI Suggestion

AI has identified the following issues that were not concluded in the meeting or lack clear action items; please pay attention:

1. **Duplexes in Single-Family Districts:** Enforcement challenges exist due to the prohibition of duplexes without a legal pathway for their creation. Community concerns about parking, maintenance, and the impact on neighborhood character need further discussion.
2. **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** The current zoning ordinance does not address ADUs, leading to ambiguity in their legality. Community feedback highlights concerns about neighborhood character and infrastructure impact.
3. **Land Development and Zoning Challenges:** The minimal undeveloped land and limited water system hookups complicate development. Lack of a straightforward development process for mixed-use areas could lead to landlocked situations.
4. **Non-Compliance with Zoning Approvals:** Widespread non-compliance with zoning approvals for accessory dwellings needs addressing. Discussions on regulating accessory dwellings to prevent them from becoming rental properties.
5. **Economic Development and Taxation:** High utility costs are driving businesses away, impacting economic development. Legal constraints on tax breaks require a minimum investment, affecting business viability.