



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
PLANNING BOARD OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER**

**Wednesday, January 31, 2024**

Worcester City Hall – Levi Lincoln Chamber,  
with remote participation options available via WebEx online at  
<https://cow.webex.com/meet/planningboardwebex> and  
call-in number 1-844-621-3956 (Access Code: 2633 685 5101).

**Board Members Present:** Albert LaValley, Chair  
Edward Moynihan, Vice Chair (*Participated Remotely*)  
Adrian Angus (*Participated Remotely*)  
Conor McCormack (*Participated Remotely*)  
Brandon King (*Participated Remotely*)

**Staff Present:** Michelle Smith, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS)  
Victor Panak, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS)

**Call to Order**

Board Chair Albert LaValley called the meeting to order at 5:50 pm. He indicated that the meeting was a special meeting called to discuss the draft Worcester Now | Next Plan.

**New Business:**

**1. Worcester Now | Next Citywide Plan – Draft Plan Report**

**a. Public Hearing**

Mr. LaValley recognized Zoe Mueller from Utile who provided the Board with a presentation on the latest draft of the Now | Next Citywide Plan. Ms. Mueller summarized the plan's purpose and drafting process, reviewed key elements of the plan like the plan headlines, Future Land Use Vision, and implementation strategy and timeline, and discussed the deliverables and next steps. She focused particularly on some of the recommended early action items: the Mobility Action Plan, Pre-Overhaul Zoning Changes, the Housing Production Plan, evaluating and improving Departmental Capacity, and the Citywide Zoning Overhaul. For next steps, Ms. Mueller noted the active public comment period that would last until February 25, 2024 and indicated that the target adoption date would be March 20, 2024. She also highlighted two upcoming open forums to discuss the transportation vision to be held on February 12, 2024 and February 21, 2024.

**Public Comment**

Edith Loberti, resident of Worcester, expressed concern with the time and place of the meeting and the noticing of the meeting for the public. She also expressed concern with what she perceived to be a lack of consideration for traffic impacts in the Plan. She preferred to see recommendations for more off-street

parking and was concerned with the projected growth of 60,000 new residents in light of outdated public infrastructure.

Craig Thomas, resident of Worcester, suggested that the City follow Boston's example of looking at how the triple-decker housing style could be adapted to better address modern housing needs.

Gordon Duncan, resident of Worcester, objected to what he perceived to be the main direction of the Plan – eliminating single-family housing and paving the way for developers to build much more dense housing. He also objected to the Plan's characterization of Worcester's past as fraught with exclusionary and racist urban planning practices. He suggested that new development should fit into the character of the neighborhoods and he also expressed concerns with increasing traffic. He raised concerns about population growth and job availability and discussed them with the Board and with Planning staff.

Mr. LaValley asked for comments from members of the Planning Board.

Mr. McCormack was positive about the plan and particularly highlighted the Plan's emphasis on equity and being a value-based document. He appreciated the sections on actionable items near the end of the document and the focus on planning for neighborhood corridors outside of the downtown.

Mr. Moynihan spoke positively about the plan drafting process and the plan itself. He noted how important it is for a city to go through such a comprehensive planning exercise. He applauded the Plan's recommendations towards a more equitable and more multi-modal city and emphasized that the Plan should reflect the aspirations of all the City's residents. Lastly, he strongly emphasized the need for more staffing and departmental capacity.

Mr. Angus also spoke positively about the plan and specifically highlighted the recommendations for improvements to the Zoning Ordinance aimed at improving some of the neighborhood commercial corridors and the recommendations for reducing parking requirements. He also appreciated the focus on accessibility.

Mr. King thanked everyone involved in the drafting of the plan, both staff and members of the public. He looked forward to implementing new zoning that would allow for more density in the neighborhood corridors that retains their unique identities.

Mr. LaValley emphasized how impressed he is with the work of Planning staff and the consultant on the City's Plan. He lamented that the City hasn't had a plan for the last 40 years because many of the issues identified today could have been avoided. He spoke highly of the plan's visual design and stated he is proud to have his name on the document. He also highlighted the history of Worcester downtown having gone from a pedestrian-focused environment to a vehicular-focused one and he was hopeful the City could return to its roots.

## **Other Business**

### **2. Approval Not Required (ANR) Plans**

- a. AN-2023-056 – 57 Mount Avenue (Public)

**On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. King, the Board voted unanimously to postpone AN-2023-056 to the Planning Board's meeting on February 7, 2024.**

## **Adjournment**

**On a motion by Mr. Moynihan, seconded by Mr. King, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:20pm.**