

**NORMAN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION MINUTES**

JANUARY 9, 2020

The Planning Commission of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Council Chambers of the Norman Municipal Building, 201 West Gray Street, on the 9th day of January, 2020. Notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Norman Municipal Building and online at <http://www.normanok.gov/content/boards-commissions> at least twenty-four hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Chair Sandy Bahan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

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Item No. 1, being:

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Matthew Peacock
Nouman Jan
Erica Bird
Sandy Bahan
Tom Knotts
Dave Boeck
Lark Zink
Steven McDaniel

MEMBERS ABSENT

Erin Williford

A quorum was present.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Jane Hudson, Director, Planning &
Community Development
Roné Tromble, Recording Secretary
Lora Hoggatt, Planner II
Janay Greenlee, Planner II
Anais Starr, Planner II
Ken Danner, Subdivision Development
Manager
David Riesland, Traffic Engineer
Beth Muckala, Asst. City Attorney
Bryce Holland, Multimedia Specialist

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Item No. 7a, being:

R-1920-83 – NORMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS REQUESTS AMENDMENT OF THE NORMAN 2025 LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN FROM OFFICE DESIGNATION TO INSTITUTIONAL DESIGNATION FOR 2.39 ACRES OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 801, 809 AND 819 N. FINDLAY AVENUE.

ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

1. 2025 Map
2. Staff Report
3. Pre-Development Summary

Item No. 7b, being:

O-1920-33 – NORMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS REQUESTS REZONING FROM PUD, PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT, AND R-1, SINGLE FAMILY DWELLING DISTRICT, TO SPUD, SIMPLE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT, FOR APPROXIMATELY 2.39 ACRES OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 801, 809 AND 819 N. FINDLAY AVENUE.

ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

1. Location Map
2. Staff Report
3. SPUD Narrative with Exhibits A-C
4. Pre-Development Summary

PRESENTATION BY STAFF:

1. Lora Hoggatt reviewed the staff report, a copy of which is filed with the minutes. Staff supports this request to amend the NORMAN 2025 Land Use Plan from Office to Institutional and recommends approval of Resolution No. R-1920-83. The applicant's request for a SPUD for the use of a school and associated uses is less intense than the approved uses for the property. It is also a compatible use near single-family residential. Staff supports the applicant's request and recommends approval of Ordinance No. O-1920-33.

PRESENTATION BY THE APPLICANT:

1. Sean Rieger, representing the applicant – I think Lora did a great job; she explained well what she did. I want to take you through another couple of items on this, though. First, I just want to say I don't think this will be the last time you see items around this area of the hospital. I think we're going to see this in front of you often in the sense that, as we all know, this area is transitioning away from as much medical as it has been over the last – my lifetime. So I think we're going to see many medical buildings around this area needing to find a new purpose and a new life and this is one of them. This building has been there a long time, and we have a great opportunity tonight to give it a new use – and a vibrant use and one that can go forward for a long time under, obviously, outstanding control with the Norman Public School System. So that's the preface to this. The location is, as you see on the screen there and Lora, again, showed you this, but we have Robinson Street across the north, Findlay Avenue along the west side, and then Oliver Street right here. And to give you a little better view of that, this in red is the outline of the property we're discussing tonight. To the left is the Norman Regional Hospital. The County fairgrounds are up across the top here. Robinson Street right here, and Findlay that comes down from here and that is a controlled intersection with a traffic light that's important – I'll show you in just a moment why. This, again, is the property that was a medical use. It will not be in the future; we know that. As the hospital transitions in this area, and so what do we do with this building? The proposal is to turn this into a K-12 school through the Norman Public School System. It would basically utilize the existing building in an extensively remodeled interior fashion, and add a gymnasium and a playground, which I'll show you in just a minute, and reconfiguring some parking on the southern end. So we have, as Lora told you, hospital and institutional all across basically the top north of it and to the west of it, and then we have R-1, Single Family, to the east and the south of it. So this is basically in the buffer zone between those two uses. I would suggest to you, also, that schools are routinely in R-1 neighborhoods commonly. You can

pick a school in Norman; you can see many of them from Monroe, to Lincoln, to Jackson, to Alcott, to Whittier. Routinely they are in single-family neighborhoods, and that's a common practice of the public school system. So this would not be unusual to be next to that use. To show you the site plan in context, this is the site plan – the existing building is this one right here. The existing parking is right here. You see this gray area is basically to remove the parking spaces, not the concrete, but the parking spaces so that a bus can make the turn to come on out down here. Again, this is the existing building, existing parking. The existing building would be remodeled extensively, then a new playground would be put in right here. Let me show you, that is where right now there is parking and significant pavement that would be altered. So we would be actually removing parking spaces and pavement to put in some open space and playground area. The playground would go right in here; black vinyl fencing here and around here, a pavement area for an outdoor court, and then the new gymnasium to the south end and a storm shelter on the west end of that gymnasium facility. So that would be the new proposal right here, and you see it in a closer site plan right there, with the interior remodeling. The existing building is the main building that's already there, the new gym to the south, the storm shelter right here, and the fenced playground right here. Just to take you through some of the specifics, and you read these in the staff report: 2.39 acres zoning to a SPUD, so a Simple Planned Unit Development. It is currently a PUD that allows for medical offices and emergency medical services – so EMT services. And the very northern part currently allows for R-1. New gym, playground, connecting sidewalks, by the way – right now there is no sidewalk right here and right here; we will be connecting those sidewalks and will be completing the pedestrian transition in that zone. This is from the staff report, but basically the Norman Regional Hospital property across Findlay is designated as Institutional. Historically schools established in residential neighborhoods. I assume you've already read all this, so I will not stay on that item. This is one item that is particular to this zoning request tonight that I want you to consider, and Lora touched on it. But, basically, we have a tree line down in the area on the site plan, and you see it right here. This particular site, if you all remember the Porter Commercial Overlay District, and long ago – way back when Van's Pig Stand and there was Tarahumara and a couple of other projects down on northern Porter Corridor resulted in a corridor study, and that study then defined basically hard line edges to what would be deemed the commercial areas. This is within that, and that edge is that edge that we're proposing. So that planned for these kind of sites to be commercial, but it had criteria in it that said on the line – on the transition point – you will put in a 4-6' masonry wall. The problem with that is masonry walls require foundations – significant foundations. And if you put a foundation on that line, you will probably kill all these trees, and so we will lose all those trees. So we don't really want to lose all those trees, because they present a really nice buffer between this site and those houses. So we're working with the neighbor. We're happy to put up basically what you would consider a pole fence, so that we don't have to put up a continuous foundation, but put up a pole fence that just at point that we can control and not have to kill the trees. So that's the proposal, but we would have to have a variance for that from you because we would not meet the actual criteria of the Porter Corridor Overlay Study, being a continuous brick wall. So that's the distinction that we're asking for you to consider and allow us to do that instead. You see that we have significant green space planned down here, so we have plenty of area to protect those trees. The drive that comes down is away from the edge. It's just we need to make sure we don't cut – basically sever that entire line of tree roots and kill those trees. With that, we would ask for your support. Greenbelt Commission forwarded this with no comments. Staff supports, recommends approval on both 2025 and the zoning request. No protests that I'm aware of. And I don't see anybody else in the room for this one, either. So, with that, I'm happy to answer any questions you have, and I thank you very much for your time.

2. Ms. Bird – Can you talk a little bit about what the use of the school is going to be? Is it going to be an elementary school?

Mr. Rieger – So it would be K-8, and it's called the Dimensions School. This is a – I probably am not real accurate in describing it. Mr. Miller, do you want to talk through

Dimensions? This is Justin Miller, with the Norman Public School System. I want to make sure we're accurate in how we describe the Dimensions School.

Mr. Miller – It's actually a K-12 school. Dimensions is currently in existence. They're currently divided on north and south side of Main Street, joining with multi-use building there with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse on the south side and some other buildings on the north side. That's their current use, serving K-12. So, with this, we were able to combine, as part of our bond that was approved by the voters of the community, to in this juncture renovate an existing building and add a new building, which is the gym/storm shelter consistent with what we've served at all of our other sites. Students at Dimensions are there for as short amount of time as a few weeks, or could be multiple years. We really are able to gauge the needs of the student and minimize that. It's a small number of students and small class sizes. When they have not been successful in the regular school environment, then we're able to work with them in this alternative education environment.

Mr. Rieger – Total number of students would be about 45.

Mr. Miller – Well, students and staff at any given point would never exceed 150 really combined in one building.

3. Ms. Bahan – I just want to clarify. The buses are going to come in off of Findlay and then go into the parking lot and come around the building and come back out on Oliver?

Mr. Rieger – Correct. Yes. The buses would – just to take you through that. The buses would come in off of Findlay right here. They would go around – and, again, we've created a turn space right there. They would come down and out onto Oliver. By law, and this is in your staff report, they have to go back to a controlled intersection, and so they would return – once they leave the site, they would return on Oliver right back to Findlay and they would go up to Robinson Street, where there is a traffic light and a controlled intersection.

4. Mr. Boeck – The only comment I had is I watched an incredibly moving show called "Children of Hope" on PBS or OETA last week that had me bawling, talking about the kids and talking to the kids about the Dimensions program and the kids that are in it. I even saw Barry Switzer crying, and that's hard to imagine. But it was a hard show to watch, but the program is really something that's special and I think it's something we should be proud of with the Norman Public Schools.

Mr. Rieger – If you don't mind me adding onto that, if you've ever – if you've gone through Leadership Norman you would have gone through the Dimensions existing facility. I would just echo the Commissioner's comment. This is really exciting that they have this opportunity to be in a new school, effectively, with a new gym that has then the opportunity to play and exercise and give them some identity that they never had before. So it's pretty exciting.

Mr. Boeck – The only question I have is are there locker rooms.

Mr. Miller – I believe there will be a dressing room/restroom. Yes.

Mr. Rieger – Let me show you. So you see the gym right here. This is ...

Mr. Boeck – So basically the safe room.

Mr. Rieger – The storm shelter.

5. Mr. Jan – If approved today, in how many years you see this facility come on line? What's the plan?

Mr. Rieger – Justin can answer that more accurately than me.

Mr. Miller – Come on line, if everything goes as planned, would be opening August of 2020 for students to start this new school year.

Mr. Jan – Very good. One last question I have, are you guys going to put any traffic signs or anything on Findlay Street?

Mr. Rieger – That's a good question. I think we would have some traffic control; I don't think we've gotten to that level of detail yet on this, but certainly that is the plan of that

movement as I talked to Commissioner Bahan, is that we want that movement to be that direction. So, yes, I think there would be some control on that.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

1. Kamala Jolly Stewart, 621 E. Hughbert Street – There are a couple of neighbors who live on Oliver that weren't able to attend tonight, but they gave me some comments and so I'm speaking on their behalf as well as just the neighborhood. I do live just south of this area. And, for context, my husband actually taught at Dimensions a few years back, and still teaches Special Ed. I am supportive of Dimensions being in our neighborhood; I have no objection to it. However, I think it's important to point that we also have Jefferson Elementary and Longfellow Middle School in our neighborhood already, so this will be a third school in our neighborhood, which is one of the things that I wanted to bring up tonight. In addition to that, as you know, the hospital is in our neighborhood. Just to the east of our neighborhood we have Griffin Memorial. We also have several churches and other businesses. What that means, in essence, is that we're a very parking lot rich neighborhood; there are lots of parking lots, dumpsters – things that aren't so pretty. With the changes that are happening around our area right now, with the potential for the Porter Corridor, for what might happen at the hospital at the Porter Campus, what might in the future happen at Griffin Memorial on that property, with what could happen at Cleveland County Fairgrounds – this is one of the main ways that people come into our neighborhood so it's very visible, and it also has a lot of traffic because there is a light there and it's a very busy light. There's always traffic there. With that context in mind as you're thinking about this project, there are some concerns we have about the layout, about the encroachment into the neighborhood, because, as you can see, they're putting the gym closer to the house, not closer to Robinson. I'm not sure what the reasoning for that is. Maybe the applicant can speak to that. It would be nice to have a buffer. The proposal at the Pre-Development was that they were going to have some green space remaining on part of the lot. I don't know why that green space couldn't be closer to our houses and to Oliver. Another objection is that the access to Oliver – that is a residential street with small homes. I'm not sure what the reason is that the buses need to come out that way, why they couldn't go back on Findlay, and so I ask you to consider if there's a way to work that so that we're not having those buses turn – especially since there's not probably going to be a fence right there protecting those residents closest to the property. That is a big concern to us. I think it's great that they have a gym but, again, does it really need to be as close to the houses in our neighborhood? We've tried to keep those boundaries and preserve our neighborhoods, especially in the core area.

2. Chris Bristow, 425 E. Hughbert Street – If this project is approved, I'll be about a half block from Longfellow, about 3 blocks from Jefferson, and about 5 blocks from Dimensions Academy. That seems like a lot of institutional land use for one neighborhood to bear. I am really concerned about the level of division between the institutional use and the R-1 use. It's been deemed appropriate to have a 4-6' masonry wall. They've pointed out there's a lot of trees at the southern part of the site, which is currently undeveloped. That's where they'd like to put their gym. I would hope that before we approve a project, that we don't have vague plans for a wall, but we have a concrete one for what would be built there. Finally, I would just encourage you all to have a look at the zoning map and see the amount of blue in our neighborhood – how much of our neighborhood is dedicated to institutional use when you're considering whether or not to approve this project, or to recommend it for approval. Thank you.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

Steven McDaniel moved to recommend adoption of Resolution No. R-1920-83 and Ordinance No. O-1920-33 to City Council. Erica Bird seconded the motion.

There being no further discussion, a vote on the motion was taken with the following result:

YEAS	Nouman Jan, Tom Knotts, Lark Zink, Erica Bird, Dave Boeck, Sandy Bahan, Steven McDaniel
NAYES	None
ABSTAIN	Matthew Peacock
MEMBERS ABSENT	Erin Williford

Ms. Tromble announced that the motion, to recommend adoption of Resolution No. R-1920-83 and Ordinance No. O-1920-33 to City Council, passed by a vote of 7-0, with 1 abstention.

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