

Initial Policy Direction Workshop Summary

The Planning and Zoning Commission held a workshop on Thursday, July 22nd at 7:30 PM at Village Hall to review and discuss the recommendations presented in the July 16, 2021, Initial Policy Direction Memorandum and to garner public input. In attendance were five members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, members of the public including Homewood residents and residents of neighboring communities, members of the local press, the Village's Director of Economic and Community Development Angela Mesaros, and two members of the Houseal Lavigne consulting team.

Pre-Meeting Activity

Before the meeting, the Village and Houseal Lavigne team engaged meeting attendees using three boards in the lobby outside of the meeting room. The goal of the three boards was to garner feedback from meeting attendees on the Village's greatest strengths and how its neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and downtown could improve. Attendees participated by writing their suggestions on sticky notes and posting them on boards. These suggestions are summarized by board below.

Note: The feedback received has been consolidated into common answers. Each sticky note is included at the end of this summary.

What are Homewood's greatest strengths?

- Open spaces and natural areas
- Residents and engaged community members
- Diversity and inclusive community

How could Homewood's residential neighborhoods improve?

- Better manage the impacts of industrial areas on neighboring residential areas
- Improved sidewalks, parks, and gardens
- More planting of native vegetation
- More retail available near residential areas
- It had an environmental justice commission

How could Homewood's commercial corridors and downtown improve?

- Greater diversity of small businesses and eateries
- Better crosswalks and improved access for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improved access for all visitors, especially those with disabilities
- Reduced truck and commercial vehicle traffic



Meeting Presentation and Discussion

In the meeting, the Houseal Lavigne team summarized the issue related to each topic, the downtown and comprehensive plan policies that are relevant to each issue, and the proposed new policy on each issue. The Commission then discussed each topic, as summarized below. At the end of the meeting, the Commission asked for public comment on any topic discussed during the meeting.

Event Spaces & Multi-Use Facilities

The Houseal Lavigne team described how event spaces and multi-use facilities have recently proliferated in the Village and especially downtown but are not adequately regulated in the Zoning Ordinance. The Houseal Lavigne team recommended that new categories of multi-use facilities be established in the updated Zoning Ordinance.

The Planning and Zoning Commission did not provide comment on the policy recommendation.

Subletting of Office spaces

The Houseal Lavigne team described how office spaces are frequently sublet to uses that are not allowed in the district. The team recommended that an administrative zoning compliance certification process be established to ensure that change of use applications comply with the Zoning Ordinance.

The Planning and Zoning Commission discussed how the zoning compliance permit would ultimately be the responsibility of the property owner rather than the new tenant. The Commission expressed that the new compliance process should require the owner's involvement and endorsement in the process.

Limit Personal Service & Medical Offices

The Houseal Lavigne team described how personal service businesses, such as hair salons and medical offices, have recently proliferated downtown, which is recommended to be a dining and entertainment destination in the Comprehensive and Downtown Plans. The team then recommended that ground-floor spaces be reserved for retail, dining, and entertainment uses, rather than personal service and office uses.

The Planning and Zoning Commission discussed how the upper floors in the district largely contain residential uses and leave few opportunities for commercial uses, although Director Mesaros noted that several upper-floor offices do exist in the district. The Planning and Zoning Commission acknowledged that provisions to ensure universal accessibility would be necessary for the upper floor commercial uses and that further discussion may be needed to determine the appropriate balance between supporting medical and personal services uses and reserving ground-floor space for dining and entertainment uses. The Commission noted that the proliferation of personal service uses impacts the community's other commercial corridors in addition to downtown.

Short-Term Rentals

The Houseal Lavigne team described how the recent increase in short-term rentals has disrupted the character of the Village's neighborhoods and could potentially impact the affordability of housing. The team recommended that use-specific standards and a permit procedure be established for short-term rentals and that they be limited to residential lots with owner-occupied residential uses.

The Planning and Zoning Commission discussed whether requiring an additional fee for the short-term rental permit would be a possible strategy. The Commission asked whether the Village can limit the length of time that guests can stay in short-term rentals. The Houseal Lavigne team replied that the State of Illinois does not limit the maximum length of stay and that this is up to municipalities to regulate. One commissioner noted that owner-occupied housing in multifamily units should allow short-term rentals.

Home-Based Businesses

The Houseal Lavigne team described how residents that work from home are not regulated separately from home-based businesses in the zoning ordinance and must obtain a permit. The consultant team suggested that the updated Zoning Ordinance explicitly allow remote work without a permit.

The Planning and Zoning Commission expressed strong support for the recommendation.

Retroactive Permitting for Two- and Three-Flats

The Houseal Lavigne team described how several two-flats and three-flats exist in the single-family residential districts but are not currently permitted uses and therefore cannot be reconstructed if destroyed. The team recommended that a retroactive permitting process be established to legalize the existing flats.

The Planning and Zoning Commission asked how other Illinois communities regulate multifamily uses in single-family zones and the Houseal Lavigne team mentioned how Bloomington, Illinois has a similar process for its historic multifamily uses. One commissioner asked whether the proposed policy would equate to a rezoning of the subject parcels. The consultant expressed that the existing uses could be legalized through a new permit procedure without rezoning any lots.

Accessory Dwelling Units

The consultant team described how accessory dwelling units, which can diversify housing options in single-family areas without disrupting the neighborhoods' character, are not addressed in the Zoning Ordinance. The team recommended that the Zoning Ordinance allow accessory dwelling units as a permitted use when within a single-family structure, and as a special use when in a detached structure.

The Planning and Zoning Commission discussed whether accessory dwelling units could be established with additional standards to regulate lot size and percentage of impervious coverage. Houseal Lavigne commented that these standards could be added with other requirements to require compatible architectural characteristics with the primary dwelling and limit the total number of accessory structures. One commissioner stated that the Village does not allow accessory dwelling units and that the new policy, especially allowing them as detached structures, would be a major shift.

Sustainable Design and Open Space Preservation

The Houseal Lavigne team described how the Village has limited authority to restrict the development of privately-owned land through its Zoning Ordinance. The team described that open space is required through minimum yard setbacks but that no standards for rain gardens, native plant species, tree preservation, or impervious surface exist. The team recommended that sustainable design standards and impervious surface limits be established in the zoning ordinance and that the review standards for permit procedures consider environmental impact.

The Planning and Zoning Commission discussed that these ideas, such as pervious pavement, were considered for a redevelopment proposal, but that the developer pushed back on the request, and that the new requirements should be added to ensure that the amenities are provided. The Houseal Lavigne team replied that the requirements, if added, would be triggered when substantial new buildings or parking are added or removed from a given site, but not necessarily when the use changes.

Public Comment

Members of the public were invited to share their thoughts on the presented issues and policies by speaking at a microphone in the room for a maximum of three minutes. A total of eleven attendees provided input, including Homewood residents and residents of neighboring communities. All attendees that provided comment expressed concern for the community's environmental impact and support for measures to preserve the environment and open space.

Several speakers expressed concern over existing residential uses that adjoin industrial uses and mentioned that the zoning ordinance should better manage the impacts of neighboring incompatible uses. Likewise, several speakers mentioned that new industrial growth near residential areas is an ongoing issue and that new standards are needed to manage new uses as well. Many speakers expressed that air quality is a concern in Homewood.

Several speakers expressed that the zoning ordinance should incorporate impervious surface limits, tree protection, tools to protect green areas such as the community's golf courses, and other approaches to preserve open space. Several speakers mentioned that environmentally friendly building design, such as LEED standards, should be required in the Zoning Ordinance. One resident expressed support for standards to strengthen stormwater management and allow solar energy uses.

Speakers also expressed support for an environmental justice commission to review land use issues with environmental impacts. Participants also reiterated the need for public engagement throughout the zoning ordinance update process.

Other Topics

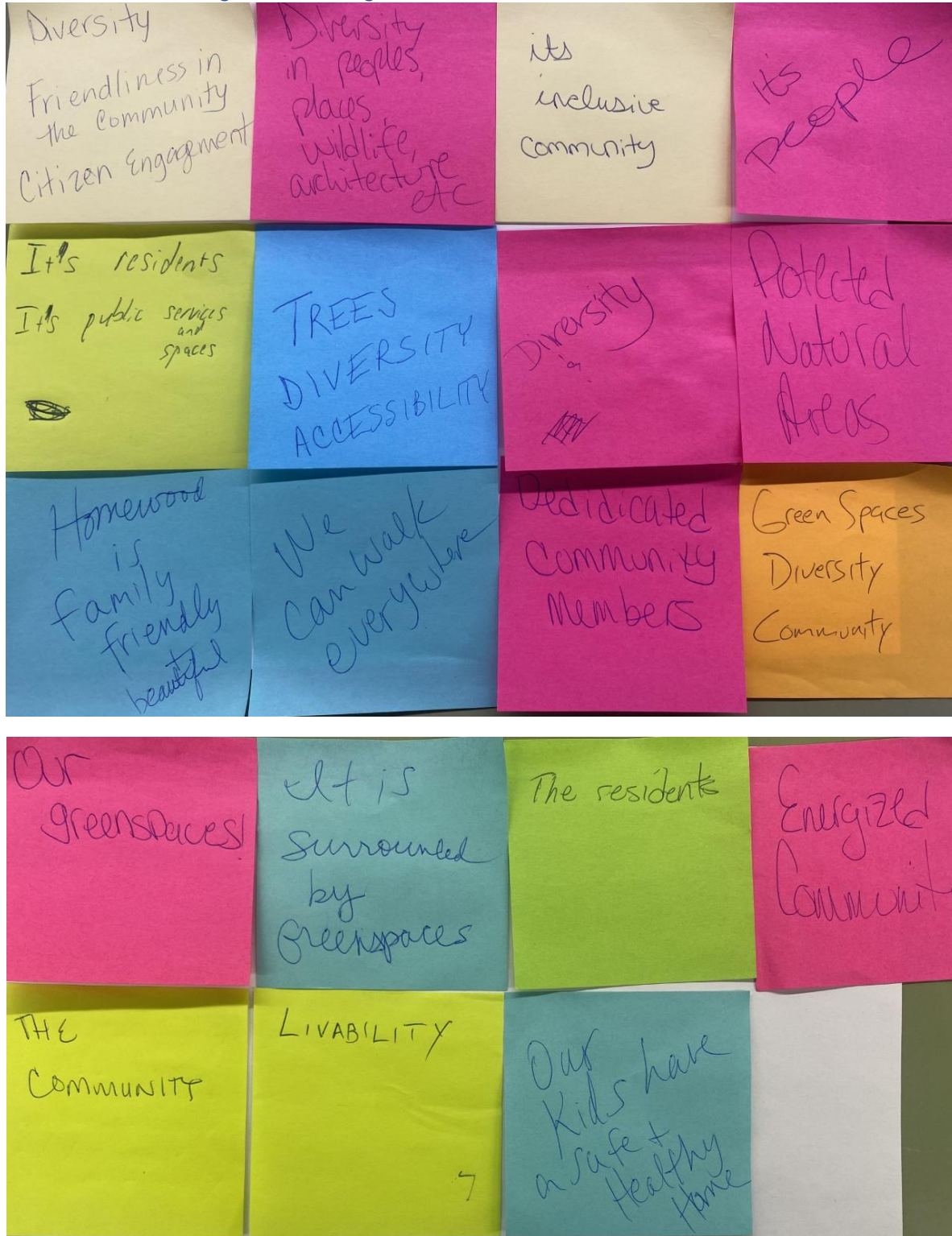
The Houseal Lavigne team described several other topics to be addressed through the zoning ordinance update including:

- Compliance with the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons of Act of 2000,
- Setback of six-foot fences in corner front yards,
- Parking pads/driveway extensions for additional residential parking spots,
- Allowances and standards for coworking spaces,
- Integration of the Halsted Street Corridor Landscape Plan,
- Standards for co-working spaces,
- Standardized intake process and establishment of internal review team

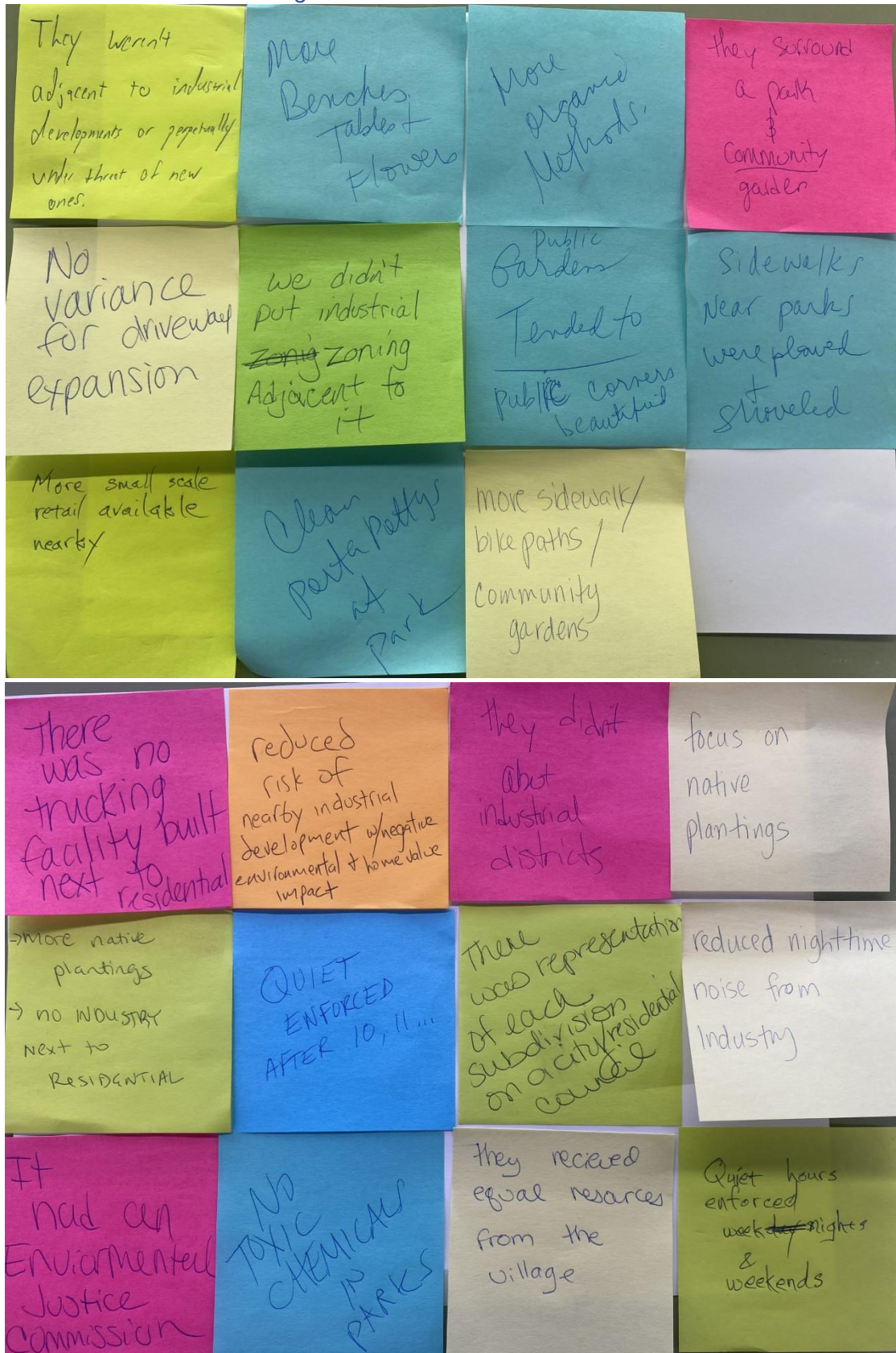
Pre-Meeting Activity Full Responses

Each sticky note response to the pre-meeting activity is shown below. Responses are organized by topic.

I think Homewood's greatest strength is...



Homewood's residential neighborhoods would be better if...



Homewood's commercial corridors & downtown would be better if...

