DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
AUGUST 3, 2026

Minutes

Mayor Amorose Groomes called the Monday, August 3, 2026 work session to order at 6:30 p.m.

Council members present: Ms. Alutto, Mayor Amorose Groomes, Vice Mayor De Rosa, Ms. Johnson, Mr. Keeler and Ms. Kramb. Dr. Lam was absent.

Staff present: Ms. O'Callaghan, Mr. Barker, Ms. Rauch, Mr. Will, Mr. Gracia, Chief Paez, Mr. Rubino, Ms. Hunter, Ms. Murray, Ms. Babbitt and Mr. Ashrawi.

Ms. Kramb led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Metro Center Revitalization Update

City Manager Megan O'Callaghan introduced the topic for the work session, noting that its purpose was to update Council on implementation efforts for the Metro Center Revitalization Plan, to review the strategy to date, and to provide an opportunity for Council to offer direction going forward.

Ms. O'Callaghan opened with a review of the Bridge Street District redevelopment as a relevant reference point, acknowledging that questions had been received from Council regarding the timeline and process used to implement that project. She emphasized that the Bridge Park experience was not presented as a prescriptive model for Metro Center, but rather as a real-world illustration of how a major redevelopment effort is sequenced and coordinated between public and private interests.

The Bridge Street District encompasses approximately two square miles, with the original Bridge Park development covering roughly 33 acres. Early visioning began in 2008 with a study trip to Greenville, South Carolina, followed by corridor planning between 2010 and 2012. From approximately 2011 to 2015, the City developed zoning code, completed a rezoning, adopted streetscape and signage guidelines, and concluded associated planning efforts. Financial and agreement work including a cooperative agreement with the schools, a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) development agreement, and the creation of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, followed that regulatory foundation. Concurrently, public infrastructure investments were incorporated into the Capital Improvement Program, covering transportation, park, and utility improvements. The first development agreement with the private partner was executed in August 2015, with Phase 1 construction commencing around that same time.

Ms. O'Callaghan underscored that the key takeaway from the Bridge Park experience was that it required several years of coordinated planning, regulatory work, financial structuring, property acquisition, and infrastructure investment all proceeding in a carefully sequenced manner alongside private development activity.

Metro Center Background and Overview

Mr. Will provided a history of the Metro Center planning effort. The Metro Center study area is bounded by I-270 to the west, Frantz Road to the east, Blazer Parkway to the south, and Upper Metro Place to the north. It encompasses approximately 22 properties within the office park itself, with additional properties along Blazer Parkway, representing approximately 100 different businesses in total.

Mr. Will noted several defining characteristics of the area: approximately 7,500 surface parking spaces covering roughly 90 acres of asphalt, limited connectivity with all access channeled through Frantz Road, and nearly 2,000,000 square feet of existing development — approximately 1,500,000 of which is office space. A notable gap in the current mix is the absence of residential uses. A significant portion of the existing office inventory is classified as Class B, and a market analysis conducted in 2023 identified a risk of further quality decline if proactive steps were not taken. Data also showed that visitor and worker activity at Metro Center had recovered to approximately 75 percent of pre-pandemic levels, while the Bridge Park and Historic District areas had not only fully rebounded but significantly exceeded prior activity levels.

A further complicating factor unique to Metro Center, as compared to Bridge Park, is the regional stormwater system. The stormwater ponds are held in common ownership and are governed by an owner's association memorandum of agreement, meaning that any action affecting even a few parcels has implications for the broader group of property owners.

Mr. Will summarized the Metro Center Revitalization Plan, which was adopted by Council in December 2024. The plan was built upon visioning work conducted in 2021 and 2022 and was intended to serve as an implementation-oriented document. It was guided by four principles: redefining the identity of Metro Center, rebalancing the district by introducing residential and other uses, reimagining water and open space through a signature green infrastructure feature, and strengthening mobility and pedestrian connections.

Three design concepts were developed and presented during the planning process — the Green Grid, Central Park, and Blue Meander (also called Waterway Park). Council ultimately supported the Blue Meander/Waterway Park concept, which envisions relocating the stormwater ponds from their current location to the interior of the loop, enabling new development to front onto reimagined water courses and pedestrian areas. Mr. Will acknowledged that this concept is the most complex of the three, as it requires maintaining existing pond functionality while constructing replacement stormwater infrastructure elsewhere.

The plan identified a 17-acre catalytic site along Frantz Road, encompassing the former Max and Erma's restaurant location, portions of the existing ponds, frontage along Frantz Road, and adjacent parking areas. Key public infrastructure investments identified in the plan include the Waterway Park, a Metro-Blazer connector road, a potential I-270 pedestrian and bicycle crossing, the Metro Bike Loop as an extension of the Signature Trail, improvements to Frantz Road, a transition to structured or shared parking arrangements, and utility upgrades to support new development.

Implementation Progress and Current Challenges

Mr. Will described the work underway since the plan's adoption. The City has engaged Sasaki to develop design guidelines addressing site design, architecture, and landscaping standards. McBride Dale has been engaged to develop a zoning road map and accompanying code. Staff planned to present an introduction to Planning and Zoning Commission in September 2026, followed by a return with draft guidelines and zoning materials for initial review and feedback prior to Council consideration. Staff has been meeting regularly with the Metro Owners Association, including its newly reconstituted board, and with HOA representatives for residential areas east of Frantz Road.

Current challenges identified include the complexity of transferring common-ownership stormwater ponds to City ownership, deed restrictions that currently limit development to auto-centric uses (though staff noted these restrictions may not be incorporated and thus may be navigable), the logistical difficulty of relocating the ponds in a phased manner while keeping existing stormwater management intact, the need to assemble adequate property for development, and identifying qualified private development partners.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding for the 2026–2030 period includes allocations for the catalytic site, stormwater improvements, streetscaping, and broader infrastructure such as the Metro-Blazer connector.

Vice Mayor De Rosa asked about the status of the remaining regulatory work, confirming that the design guidelines and zoning code represented the one major outstanding piece needed to attract private development interest. Ms. Rauch and Mr. Will confirmed that these elements were more than halfway complete and that the goal was to bring them before Planning and Zoning Commission in September, with a realistic path to Council consideration by the end of 2026 or early 2027.

Ms. Kramb drew a parallel to the Bridge Street District experience, noting that even before the Bridge Street code was formally adopted, some early development applications were reviewed against draft guidelines. She asked whether a similar interim approach would apply in Metro Center, and Ms. Rauch confirmed that the same framework could be used if a developer wished to proceed before the code was finalized, though she noted most developers would likely prefer to wait for regulatory certainty.

Mr. Keeler observed that, measured against the Bridge Park timeline of roughly seven years from visioning to construction, Metro Center was not behind schedule — and in fact may be facing a significantly more complicated set of conditions. He noted the importance of translating the level of public investment made at Bridge Park into comparable commitments for Metro Center, estimating that inflation-adjusted land acquisition costs alone could range from 32 to 39 million dollars and that public infrastructure investments could approach 136 million dollars. He also suggested that efforts should be made to build enthusiasm among existing property owners, who stand to benefit substantially from successful redevelopment.

Ms. Alutto expressed support for the overall direction and echoed the importance of moving the code and guidelines forward as promptly as possible while ensuring thorough review. She also requested that future updates include more detail on marketing and outreach strategies to generate momentum around the catalytic development zone, particularly as the regulatory framework was being finalized. She commended staff for their collaborative approach with property owners rather than relying on a more prescriptive or adversarial posture.

Vice Mayor De Rosa offered a different emphasis on the Bridge Park comparison, noting that the more instructive lesson was not the timeline itself but rather the sequencing. Specifically, she highlighted that the City did not commit its largest public infrastructure investments until a private development partner was in place and the full framework — plan, code, and agreements — was established. She observed that Metro Center currently lacked that private partner commitment, and she urged the Council and staff to focus on what specific steps and incentives would be needed to attract a catalytic developer. She requested that staff develop a clearer picture of the projected timeline and the tools such as TIF, CIP programming, and other economic development instruments that would be used to secure a development partner.

Mayor Amorose Groomes sought clarification on the nature of the code being developed, and Mr. Will confirmed that it would build upon the existing Mixed Use Regional (MUR) framework, emphasizing design quality and appropriate uses rather than a traditional form-based code. Mayor Amorose Groomes expressed a preference for some gap in timing between adoption of the design guidelines and code on the one hand and the area-wide rezoning on the other, to ensure adequate public process. Mr. Will noted that the rezoning would be brought to Council alongside the guidelines and code rather than separately, and that property owner outreach on rezoning implications had already begun.

Ms. Kramb encouraged staff to directly notify all residents east of Frantz Road — not solely through HOA leadership channels — of upcoming Planning and Zoning Commission meetings and materials. She also emphasized the importance of using the word "rezoning" explicitly in all public communications, noting that ambiguous language in prior community planning efforts had caused confusion and concern among residents.

Mr. Will confirmed that the City had been proactively communicating with HOA representatives at each step of the process, notifying them in advance of Planning and Zoning Commission appearances and sharing preview materials from the design guidelines.

Ms. O'Callaghan confirmed that staff had received sufficient direction from Council to move forward and expressed appreciation for the feedback.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Presiding Officer – Mayor

Jennifer Delgado

Clerk of Council