



MEETING MINUTES

Planning & Zoning Commission

Thursday, September 17, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Way at 6:30 PM at 5555 Perimeter Drive. He welcomed attendees and noted that the meeting could be joined in person or accessed via livestream on the City's website.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Way led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Commission members present: Gary Alexander, Jamey Chinnock, Dan Garvin, Kathy Harter, Victoria Newell, Kim Way. Hilary Damaser arrived at 6:31 p.m.

Staff members present: Bassem Bitar, Joe Batchelor, Rati Singh, Zachary Hounshell, Jeremiah Gracia

Others present: Martin Zogran and Anthony Polidoro, Sasaki

DISCUSSION

Mr. Way explained that the Planning and Zoning Commission serves as an advisory board to City Council in matters of rezoning and platting. He further noted that no determination would be made at this meeting, that staff and consultants would present and discuss the draft Metro Center Design Guidelines and proposed zoning approach, and that public comment would be accepted following commission feedback.

Metro Center Design Guidelines

Mr. Bitar provided an introductory overview of the purpose of the meeting. He explained that the presentation represented an update on the approach being taken to the Metro Center Design Guidelines, which are intended to carry forward the Metro Center Revitalization Plan adopted by City Council at the end of 2024. He noted that three work sessions had previously been held with City Council to validate the goals and ensure alignment with the foundational vision of the guidelines.

Mr. Bitar outlined the general timeline: the current meeting would focus on gaining commission input on the organizational approach and overall logic of the guidelines, followed by a subsequent meeting at which guidelines ready for formal action — in the form of a recommendation to City Council — would be presented, along with the accompanying zoning component. He described the

intent for the guidelines to become a chapter within the Revitalization Plan, creating a unified reference document for developers and reviewers.

Mr. Bitar also contextualized the approach by referencing three existing frameworks: the Bridge Street District, which is highly prescriptive and code-heavy; the Historic District, which balances guidelines and code more evenly; and the proposed Metro Center approach, which is intended to be more heavily reliant on intent statements and guidelines, with the code reserved for items that must be strictly regulated. He noted that the code would reference the guidelines so that the two work in concert.

Martin Zogran, Urban Design Principal at Sasaki Associates, and Anthony Polidoro, Senior Associate Urban Designer, presented an overview of the draft Metro Center Design Guidelines. Mr. Zogran provided background on the Metro Center Revitalization Plan, which was completed approximately two and a half years ago. He described the rigorous planning process that preceded the guidelines, including community outreach, analysis of parcelization, land use, stormwater systems, roadway networks, and open space.

Mr. Zogran explained that the guidelines take a performance-based approach rather than a prescriptive one, a model he described as increasingly prevalent nationally. He outlined the hierarchical structure of the document, which moves from broad design foundations through goals, site-level strategies, character areas, and ultimately to specific design guidelines for each area.

The five design foundations identified in the document are: biophilic design, cities for people, ecological urbanism, organic urbanism, and rationalistic urbanism. From these, eight site-wide goals were derived, followed by a more granular set of strategies grouped into three categories: site, architecture, and landscape and public realm. The document then shifts to spatial recommendations organized around five character areas — the Frantz Road Gateway, Waterway Park, Cosgray Run, the Highway Corridor, and the District Streetscapes — each with its own set of design themes and recommendations addressing the relationship between landscape and the built environment.

Mr. Zogran described the Frantz Road Gateway as the front door of the project, noting that design guidance for this area addresses elements such as massing transitions, view corridors, height restrictions to ensure a sensitive transition to adjacent neighborhoods, and ground floor activation. He noted that an illustrative axonometric diagram of this area was included in the document as an example of potential outcomes, intended to convey aspirational intent rather than prescribe a specific outcome.

The presentation then paused for commission discussion before Mr. Polidoro continued with the district-wide design guidance and character area details.

Ms. Newell offered feedback on the document from her perspective as a practicing architect and LEED coordinator. She expressed concern that the guidelines, as currently drafted, are broad enough that a developer could justify nearly any design proposal as compliant. She cautioned that some aspirational elements — particularly those related to renewable energy such as photovoltaics, wind energy, and geothermal systems — are not practical or easily enforceable in the Central Ohio climate. She further noted that her experience presenting before commissions operating under form-based codes had shown that such frameworks can produce ambiguity for both applicants and commissioners, making it difficult to draw clear lines when evaluating proposals.

Mr. Garvin acknowledged the layered organizational approach and expressed appreciation for its clarity. He suggested that the document would benefit from a more explicit hierarchy that signals

to reviewers which intentions are most critical, which in turn could imply appropriate flexibility in less critical areas.

Mr. Alexander expressed general positivity about the document's direction, noting that the outline is a starting point and that the zoning component would provide additional structure. He asked whether a performance-based code would be harder to administer than a prescriptive one, and Mr. Zogran acknowledged that it requires greater discretion from reviewers, as applicants must demonstrate that they have met a performance outcome rather than simply check a compliance box.

Mr. Alexander also expressed support for the sustainability-oriented language, noting the importance of aspirational elements such as embodied energy and biophilic design as distinguishing features of the Metro Center district relative to others in Dublin.

Ms. Harter expressed support for ensuring that Metro Center develops its own distinct identity that complements rather than replicates Bridge Park and the Historic District. She noted the importance of reflecting prior work done along Frantz Road, and emphasized the value of sustainability language in the document.

Mr. Chinnock stated that he found the vision, logic, and approach to be strong and exciting, but acknowledged that the performance-based model represents a significant mental shift for both staff and the commission. He noted that the review process would likely require more iterations with applicants and more back-and-forth than the commission has experienced under more prescriptive frameworks. He also encouraged a greater emphasis in the design foundations on true walkability — in the sense of daily functional walkability rather than recreational walkability — and on the potential for Metro Center to become a self-sustaining community where residents can live, work, and play without relying on automobile access.

Ms. Damaser raised concerns about the generality of the design foundations and goals, stating that in her legal experience, language this broad is highly arguable and could be used to justify almost any proposal. She questioned whether there was a meaningful distinction between the foundations and the goals as presented, characterizing them as similarly general. She drew an analogy to jazz, noting that improvisation requires an underlying set of rules to function, and argued that the commission similarly needs more structural boundaries in order to evaluate proposals defensibly. She did, however, express appreciation for the more detailed content encountered further in the document.

Mr. Bitar clarified that the foundations are not intended to be the enforceable layer of the document. He suggested that the commission continue through the presentation, as the character area guidelines provide more specific and measurable recommendations. He emphasized that the goal is to have the design guidelines and zoning code work in tandem, with the code providing baseline regulatory requirements and the guidelines providing the design intent.

Mr. Way offered his own observations, noting that the document is intended to set intent rather than function as a final regulatory instrument. He expressed that the graphics, diagrams, and precedent images in the document should work together more cohesively to communicate that intent, noting that label language such as "mediate transitions" may not be accessible to all audiences. He encouraged linking the precedent images more explicitly to the intent statements they are meant to support, and advocated for ensuring that all images are relevant to the Central

Ohio context. He noted that the document has the potential to be a distinctive and effective tool, but that stronger integration of visuals, words, and diagrams is needed to fully realize that potential.

Ms. Newell reiterated her concern about generality in the context of how developers would use the document, noting that experienced developers will test the boundaries of any guidelines presented to them. She identified two items she felt should be elevated in priority: the weaving of Dublin's signature trail network into the district, and provisions for the adaptive reuse of buildings. She expressed concern that the document does not yet address construction types, noting that most structures built under the Bridge Street District framework used construction methods that are not conducive to future adaptive reuse.

Mr. Garvin echoed the concern about design quality, noting that even successful planning frameworks in Dublin have sometimes yielded buildings that did not reflect strong architectural design. He questioned how the city could incentivize developers to prioritize high-quality design, referencing the models of Columbus, Indiana, and the Ohio State University campus as examples where external institutional pressure resulted in elevated architectural outcomes.

Mr. Bitar acknowledged the challenge, noting that partnering with the right developers and design teams would be a key part of achieving the vision, and that such coordination was already underway.

Mr. Polidoro continued the presentation, elaborating on the district-wide design strategies and the intent behind each character area.

Frantz Road Gateway

Mr. Polidoro described the emphasis on creating a sense of arrival, framing view corridors toward the Waterway Park, treating the frontage as a linear park space rather than a development edge, and ensuring a sensitive height transition to the residential neighborhoods across Frantz Road.

Waterway Park

He described the character area as the ecological and social heart of the plan. He explained the intent to bring the stormwater ponds from the periphery to the center of the site as a focal amenity, and outlined design guidance around enabling meaningful interaction with the water's edge, creating memorable destinations, and anticipating interim conditions during phased development.

Cosgray Run

Mr. Polidoro described the intent of to preserve and enhance the existing natural stream corridor in a quieter, more ecologically sensitive manner than the Waterway Park, while ensuring that new development along this edge responds to it as a natural asset and connects it to the broader trail network.

Highway Corridor

He described the goal of signaling Metro Center's identity and future as an employment center to those traveling on I-270, while preserving the green highway edge characteristic of Dublin. He noted that height in this area presents an opportunity to make a bold architectural statement and that signage should be integrated within a district-wide approach rather than expressed as individual corporate identity.

District Streetscapes

He described the goal of transforming the expansive setbacks along Metro Place North and South into activated, walkable frontages that connect Cosgray Run to the Waterway Park, and of converting underutilized parking landscapes into usable amenity spaces for existing and future tenants.

Commission members offered the following responses to the character area content.

Mr. Garvin stated that the character areas effectively addressed the peripheral conditions of the site. He noted that the interaction with the waterway and parks was an area where more explicit requirements may be needed, as there is not always a natural economic incentive for developers to prioritize those connections.

Mr. Alexander stated that the character areas addressed peripheral transition conditions well, and suggested that requiring a measurable formula for the incorporation of natural or green elements into buildings could help define Metro Center's distinctive character. He also expressed concern about consistently achieving high design quality from developers and echoed Mr. Garvin's reference to the importance of incentivizing architectural excellence. He noted that the two buildings in Dublin to have received design awards in recent years — the library and the Co-Hatch building — were the product of clients and architects who made design a priority.

Ms. Newell reiterated her concern that the Dublin Connector trail linkage, though mentioned in the document, was not given sufficient prominence. She also emphasized the importance of specifying minimum construction standards so that buildings can be adapted for future uses, contrasting this with the wood-frame podium structures common in the Bridge Street District.

Mr. Chinnock expressed enthusiasm for the character areas overall but requested greater specificity in the Highway Corridor section, noting that the balance between preserving the green highway edge and creating meaningful visual presence and view corridors into the district deserved more detailed treatment. He also raised the question of whether the neighborhood office subdistrict should allow for some residential use to better support Frantz Road activation and walkability, though he acknowledged that the direction may already be established.

Ms. Damaser expressed appreciation for the more detailed content in the character areas section. She noted that she wanted to ensure the Waterway Park would be genuinely interactive and usable — distinct from a standard detention pond — and that the Frantz Road edge be described accurately as a gateway rather than a transition, given the height differential between the existing residential context and proposed development.

Ms. Harter expressed enthusiasm for the Waterway Park as a people-gathering destination that would offer a distinctive experience not found elsewhere in Dublin. She emphasized the importance of neighborhood connections, the role of the COTA transit system in supporting mobility throughout the district, rooftop programming as a sustainability and activation opportunity, and the economic development potential of providing amenities and gathering spaces that support existing businesses.

Mr. Way noted the absence of explicit discussion of mobility hubs or transit nodes within the character area content, suggesting that this element from the Revitalization Plan should be incorporated. He also observed that the connection over I-270 should be treated as an extension of the district streetscape framework and could serve as a major branding element for Metro Center as a whole.

Zoning Roadmap

Mr. Hounshell presented a preliminary roadmap for the proposed MUR 1 (Mixed Use Revitalization 1) zoning district. He noted that the slides represented an internal outline and directional framework rather than final zoning text, and that the actual zoning code would be presented at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Hounshell described the MUR 1 district as one component within the broader Dublin Corporate Area, which also includes MUR 2, MUR 3, and the previously established MUR 4 district in the southwest portion of the area. He explained that while the character areas established in the design guidelines are useful for addressing design, frontage, and natural features, they did not translate cleanly into zoning administration. Accordingly, staff consolidated those character areas into three zoning subdistricts: a Highway Corridor subdistrict focused on office and employment-oriented development; a Neighborhood Office subdistrict maintaining the existing small-scale suburban office character; and a Mixed Use subdistrict encompassing the central areas of Metro Center.

Mr. Hounshell noted that the subdistrict boundaries are based primarily on existing parcel lines, with the exception of the boundary between the Mixed Use and Neighborhood Office subdistricts along Metro Place North and South, which follows the future street alignment rather than the existing alignment.

He outlined the key elements to be addressed in the zoning text, including permitted uses, use-specific standards, development standards such as setbacks and height maximums, parking requirements, and provisions for existing buildings. He emphasized that the zoning is intended to create the regulatory framework — or as he described it, the box — within which development must operate, while the design guidelines provide direction on how buildings are designed and massed within that box.

Mr. Hounshell noted that residential uses would not be permitted in the Neighborhood Office subdistrict, would be carefully managed in the Highway Corridor with use-specific standards to avoid residential adjacency to the highway, and would be expected within the Mixed Use subdistrict with appropriate standards to ensure balanced land uses.

He described a proposed parking approach of requiring each development to submit a parking plan rather than imposing minimum parking ratios, with the goal of encouraging shared parking across the district given the complexity of multiple property ownerships.

Regarding the review process, he noted that the commission's existing two-step review process — concept plan and final development plan — as established in MUR 4, would be carried forward for MUR 1. He clarified that concept plan review is informal and does not result in a determination.

Mr. Way asked for confirmation that the concept plan stage does not require a formal commission decision, and Mr. Hounshell confirmed that this had been updated approximately one year prior for all relevant districts.

Ms. Newell asked whether the zoning subdistrict map had been analyzed in overlay with the design guidelines character area map, and whether the two could be more explicitly integrated. Mr. Hounshell confirmed that the boundaries generally align and noted that staff was exploring the

inclusion of an activation map — similar to the neighborhood standards maps used in the Bridge Street District — to help bridge the gap between the two frameworks.

Ms. Newell raised the issue of the Waterway Park's stormwater capacity, stating that the commission would need to know the required volume and footprint of the waterway in order to meaningfully evaluate development proposals, particularly if a developer were to argue that only a smaller water feature was feasible on a given parcel. Mr. Hounshell acknowledged the point and noted that the city would have a significant role in the actual design of the stormwater system, and that relevant technical studies from the Revitalization Plan would be available to inform those discussions.

Mr. Bitar confirmed that technical studies addressing the stormwater ponds were included within the Revitalization Plan and would be made available in the context of development review. He indicated that the city would be heavily involved in the infrastructure and would pursue development agreements as appropriate.

Mr. Way and Mr. Garvin both emphasized that the Waterway Park must function as a publicly accessible park controlled by the City, not as a privately managed amenity or a fragmented series of individual retention ponds. Mr. Hounshell affirmed agreement with that position.

Mr. Chinnock asked why the Neighborhood Office subdistrict excludes residential uses, given the potential benefit to Frantz Road activation and walkability. Mr. Hounshell explained that this designation aligns with the Revitalization Plan's direction to maintain the smaller-scale, suburban character of that portion of the site and to provide a transitional step down in scale toward the southeastern corner of the district. Mr. Chinnock suggested the commission revisit this determination as the code is developed, noting that allowing some residential in that area could strengthen the pedestrian environment.

Mr. Way also noted the absence of discussion in the zoning roadmap regarding mobility hubs, reiterating the point raised during the character area discussion.

Public Comment

Diane Cartolano, 3390 Martin Road, Dublin, offered two comments. First, she expressed concern about the welfare of wildlife currently inhabiting the stormwater ponds on the Metro Center site, and urged that the disruption of that ecosystem be managed with sensitivity and in coordination with relevant state agencies such as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources or the Ohio Wildlife Center. Second, she asked whether any traffic studies had been conducted or were planned in connection with the increased density anticipated under the Metro Center redevelopment, and whether improvements to Frantz Road such as widening were being considered.

Mr. Way indicated that the commission was not in a position to respond to those questions directly, and encouraged the commenter to contact the City of Dublin for specific responses.

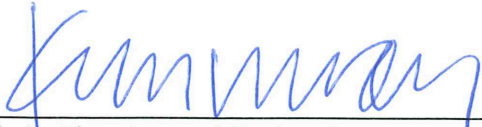
There being no further public comments, the public comment period was closed.

COMMUNICATIONS

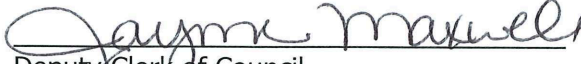
Mr. Bitar reported that there were no communications items for the evening.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 pm.



Chair, Planning and Zoning Commission



Deputy Clerk of Council