

## **Citizen's Guide to the Plan and Zoning Commission**

### **What is the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

The Plan and Zoning Commission is a seven (7) member body of citizens appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council, whose main task is to conduct thorough reviews of development proposals to ensure that the development proposals are consistent with the community's established land use patterns and development standards. The Commission bases its reviews on the goals and policies of the City, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations. Upon completion of its review, the Commission makes a recommendation for approval, conditional approval or denial of the development proposal to the City Council, who has final decision-making authority.

### **What types of projects are reviewed by the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

In general, the Commission reviews land use changes, zoning changes, proposed new development projects, and significant changes or additions to existing projects or developments. Such projects include site plans, grading plans, subdivision plats, comprehensive plan amendments, rezoning requests, and master plans for development proposals.

### **How is the project review process conducted?**

An application which includes all of the necessary drawings and documents as outlined in the application submittal requirements is submitted to the Development Services Department, a case planner is assigned and it is started in the Development Review process. Copies of the application are distributed to various City departments and other applicable outside agencies for their review and comments. The comments are summarized by the case planner in a letter back to the applicant and any major problems are worked out. Once all issues are appropriately addressed by the applicant, the project is tentatively placed on a Commission and Council agenda. The case planner prepares a staff report which summarizes the proposed project, discusses any major problems or issues, actions necessary to resolve them, and recommends approval, conditional approval or denial of the project. The project is then reviewed at a Plan and Zoning Commission meeting and a recommendation to Council is made by the Commission.

### **How are Plan and Zoning Commission meetings conducted?**

The Chairperson of the Commission conducts the meeting following an approved agenda. First, the applicant is asked to explain the proposed project and identify any conditions of approval with which they disagree. Second, the case planner discusses the project explaining any issues or conditions and answers questions from the Commission. Next the Commission will invite any member of the audience wishing to speak on the proposal to come forward. Upon hearing all comments applicable to the proposed project, the Commission will discuss the project, ask any additional questions of the applicant and/or staff, and vote on a recommendation to the City Council. The Commission's options are: recommend approval, recommend approval which includes conditions of approval, or recommend denial. In some situations, the Commission may decide to continue its review to a subsequent meeting to allow additional time for research or problem solving.

### **What happens after the Plan and Zoning Commission makes its decision?**

With the exception of Grading Permits, the Commission does not have the authority to approve or deny a project. They are a recommending body only and therefore make a recommendation for approval, approval with conditions, or denial to the City Council who has final authority to approve or deny a project proposal. An applicant can proceed to Council with a recommendation of denial from the Plan and Zoning Commission. The City Council takes into consideration the Plan and Zoning Commission's recommendation when making their decision and may concur, modify, or reject the Plan and Zoning Commission's recommendations.

### **When and where does the Plan and Zoning Commission conduct meetings?**

Unless otherwise posted, the Commission meets every other Monday at 5:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers, West Des Moines City Hall, 4200 Mills Civic Parkway. At times a meeting date may be changed to avoid conflict with some other activity, holiday, special event, etc. On rare occasions, a special meeting may be scheduled; therefore, you are advised to verify the time and date of proposed meetings. The agenda for the upcoming meeting is typically available on the City's website the Friday prior to the next meeting date. Visitors to the City's website can view a specific agenda (i.e. City Council Agenda, Board of Adjustment, Plan & Zoning Commission, etc) by clicking

on the "Minutes and Agendas" column on the Welcome page of the City's website. Once in that section, scroll down to the specific City board or commission area and click on a particular meeting date for a copy of that meeting's agenda. Copies of the Plan and Zoning Commission schedule are available at the Development Services Department or on the City's [website at www.wdm-ia.com/Your Government/Development Services/Plan and Zoning Commission/Meeting Date Schedule](http://www.wdm-ia.com/Your_Government/Development_Services/Plan_and_Zoning_Commission/Meeting_Date_Schedule).

**How are the Commissioners selected to serve on the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

The Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor of West Des Moines and confirmed by the City Council to serve a five (5) year term. Terms begin on April 1 of each year. The terms for the Commissioners are staggered to ensure there are always experienced members serving on the Commission. Residents of West Des Moines interested in becoming a member of the Plan and Zoning Commission may contact the City Clerk's office at (515) 222-3600 to request an application to be considered by the Mayor for appointment.

**How do I obtain additional information regarding the Plan and Zoning Commission?**

For more information please contact the Development Services Department at (515) 222-3620, or visit our office located on the second floor of the City Hall building at 4200 Mills Civic Parkway. Business hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Additional information is also available on the City of West Des Moines' web page located at [www.wdm-ia.com/Your Government/Development Services/Plan and Zoning Commission](http://www.wdm-ia.com/Your_Government/Development_Services/Plan_and_Zoning_Commission).