

AGENDA  
GRAND MARAIS PLANNING COMMISSION  
October 7, 2020, 4:00 P.M.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. ROLL CALL

C. ADOPT AGENDA

D. APPROVE MINUTES

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

-None

F. NEW BUSINESS

Accessory Residential in BDA

BDA Zoning Purpose Statement

G. OLD BUSINESS

-Housing Zoning Amendments

ADJOURN

# Grand Marais Community Vision:

“Grand Marais is a thriving community that features locally-grown economic opportunity, housing that meets all family needs, and a wide array of educational opportunities.

Hallmarks of the Grand Marais way of life include active recreation on the North Shore, commitment to community, an ethos of creativity and innovation, and stewardship of the unique natural environment.”

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## USING THE COMMUNITY VISION PLAN

[The Grand Marais Community Vision Plan](#) is a roadmap to the future, a document of community voices and ideas, and a collective call to action. The vision, values, priorities, and ideas provide a framework for future planning - and serve as a jumping-off point for further discussion, brainstorming, and community investment. This vision plan seeks to inspire solutions and initiatives that will uphold the values of the Grand Marais community and realize an exciting, community-led vision for the future.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

### **See the Big Picture:**

The Grand Marais Vision Plan presents a wide-angle view of the community, summarizing key assets, challenges, trends, and aspirations across a range of issues impacting the quality of life in the community. The Plan is a resource for residents, businesses, property owners, City staff, and other interested parties wishing to learn more about the community, its current conditions, and future direction.

### **Set a Course for the Future:**

The Plan presents an exciting, community-led vision that describes how Grand Marais will look, feel, and function in the future. The vision is intended to be ambitious, but achievable - and rooted in the existing qualities, character, strengths, and assets of the Grand Marais community.

### **Guide Future Action + Decision-Making:**

The plan establishes a framework of principles and goals for future planning and action. This framework serves as a guide for future decision-making and a jumping-off point for discussion, imagination, and action. Community members, City staff, and community leaders all have a role to play to realize the vision and priorities presented here.

## THE PLANS DEVELOPMENT

The Grand Marais Community Vision Plan was developed through an eight-month, community-driven process, involving a range of community stakeholders - residents, businesses, property owners, and community leaders. Community members contributed their own ideas, concerns, and priorities to the development of the Plan through a hands-on community workshop and community survey.

Community input was supplemented by a comprehensive analysis of existing conditions that examined social and economic characteristics, housing, land use, parks, transportation, and other physical conditions. The vision, principles, and goals presented in the Plan represent an in-depth and collaborative effort to understand the forces shaping Grand Marais' future and establish a collective direction for the future.

## GRAND MARAIS COMMUNITY GOALS

The following six community goals\* are the product of a public process that solicited comments, input, and ideas from a broad cross-section of Grand Marais residents, businesses, and property owners. These goals define community priorities and provide high-level direction for future community action and decision-making.

### **Support and enhance local business.**

Grand Marais is the hub of Cook County, known for locally-owned businesses and livable wages. Land-use and zoning decisions help ensure the long-term economic viability of the community.

### **Ensure access to affordable, lifecycle housing for all people.**

The community is concerned about the growing expense of housing and access to a variety of housing types that can serve all people throughout their lives.

### **Invest in safe, people-friendly infrastructure that supports active living.**

Infrastructure is aesthetically pleasing, enhances Grand Marais' historic character and is safe for people who use a variety of transportation modes.

### **Enhance the community's deep connection to the outdoors and active engagement with the environment.**

Lake Superior and the surrounding area are to be protected and celebrated by the community and the City, to be preserved for active use today and for generations to come.

### **Encourage the expansion of sustainable energy uses.**

Community members recognize the value of their unique natural environment. They value preservation, active use of the natural environment, and sustainability in all community practices.

### **Expand education for the mind, body, and soul.**

Grand Marais treasures arts practices, advancing education in all forms, and opportunities for community education and community development.

\*The Grand Marais Community Goals are extracted from [The Grand Marais Community Vision Plan](#) page 8.

*Planning Commission  
Minutes  
August 5, 2020*

Meeting was called to order by Hal Greenwood at 4:00 p.m.

Members present: Stacey Hawkins, Hal Greenwood, Michael McHugh, and Michael Garry  
Absent: Tim Kennedy  
Staff Present: Patrick Knight, Haden Hinchman, and Mike Roth  
Others Present: Mary Somnis and Brad Shannon

**Motion by Hawkins, seconded by McHugh to approve the proposed agenda. Approved unanimously.**

**Motion by Hawkins, seconded by McHugh to approve the minutes of the July 1, 2020 meeting. Approved unanimously.**

Mary Somnis presented a plan for one of the EDA lots to be utilized as a Youth Center. She asked for the Planning Commission to review and change the accepted uses of the BDA zone so that this and similar uses would be allowed. The commission discussed the proposed use and considered its fit in the park, as well as other uses that have located there. The Planning Commission will hold a hearing at their next meeting to consider the requested change.

Roth asked the Planning Commission members to be available for the upcoming City Council meeting to discuss the passing of the updated housing zoning ordinances.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

*Planning Commission  
Minutes  
September 2, 2020*

Meeting was called to order by Tim Kennedy at 4:00 p.m.

Members present: Stacey Hawkins, Hal Greenwood, Michael McHugh, and Michael Garry  
Absent: Tim Kennedy  
Staff Present: Patrick Knight, Haden Hinchman, and Mike Roth  
Others Present: Mary Somnis, Jeff Miller, and Brad Shannon

**Motion by Greenwood, seconded by Garry to approve the proposed agenda. Approved unanimously.**

Hamilton Habitat is requesting a variance from the 25' minimum side yard setback requirement to construct a single family home 10' from the side lot line on a lot located at the Northeast corner of County Road 7 and the Gunflint trail in the R-2 zone. No comments were submitted from the public.

The Commission noted that it is their recommendation that all R-2 properties be rezoned to R-1, and that this proposal would meet the R-1 standards without need for a variance. The Commission also noted that Hamilton Habitat has been active and successful in creating affordable housing opportunities. The Commission adopted the following findings:

- 1. The variance is in harmony with the purpose and intent of the ordinance.**  
Additional residential units are desired in the R-2 Multiple Family Residential zone and generally in the City.
- 2. The variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan.**  
The plan identifies additional housing, particularly in-fill, as needed in the community.
- 3. The proposal seeks to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the zoning ordinance.**  
Conformance to the R-1 standards for a single family home developed in a residential zone is reasonable.
- 4. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.**  
The property includes significant wetlands that limit the ability to adjust building plans.
- 5. The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.**  
Additional residential units will not alter the character of the neighborhood.

**Motion by Greenwood, seconded by McHugh to recommend approval of the Hamilton Habitat's variance to the City Council. Approved unanimously.**

Benjamin Leatham is requesting a conditional use permit to construct a single unit residence as a part of a lodging/commercial development on a lot located at the Northeast corner of Highway 61 and the Gunflint Trail in the C/I Service Commercial Industrial zone. City Hall did receive a question about the proposal but no comments from the public were submitted.

The Commission noted that the permit is required for the residential unit and that the other proposed uses are allowed permitted by the ordinance. Kennedy asked if they should include a stipulation that the residential unit be required to be related to the business use on the property as a means to reduce potential conflict between the uses. Other Commissioners remarked that the additional residential unit was desired whether or not it was related to the business. The Commission adopted the following findings:

- 1) **The use conforms to the land use or comprehensive plan of the City.**  
A single unit residence is an allowed conditional use in the C/I zone.
- 2) **The use is compatible with the existing neighborhood.**  
Residential uses neighbor the property to the North and South, with additional residential uses further to the East.
- 3) **The use will not impeded the normal and orderly development and improvement in the surrounding area of uses permitted by right in the zone district.**  
The residence supports the commercial development of the lot.
- 4) **The location and character of the proposed use is considered to be consistent with a desirable pattern of development for the area.**  
The residence supports a desirable commercial development on the lot.

**Motion by McHugh, seconded by Greenwood to recommend approval of Benjamin Leatham's conditional use permit to the City Council. Approved unanimously.**

The Commission held a public hearing to consider amending the permitted principal uses in the BDA zone to include services. The commission expressed support for the proposed use. Hawkins reiterated her concern that a non-profit would be located in the taxpayer constructed Business Park.

**Motion by Garry, seconded by Greenwood to recommend amending the Zoning Ordinance for the BDA zone to include "services" in the permitted principal use. Ayes: Greenwood, Kennedy, McHugh, and Garry; Nays: Hawkins.**

The Commission discussed the comments that were received about the zoning ordinance update process and how do address those in the ordinance. The Commission decided to table this discussion until next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

DATE: September 24, 2020  
TO: Grand Marais Planning and Zoning  
FROM: Mary Somnis, Executive Director, Cook County/Grand Marais EDA  
RE: Zoning Amendment for Cedar Grove Business Park

We recently met about the EDA's request to add "services" as allowable use at Cedar Grove. You approved that request on September 2, 2020 and recommended to the City Council that the ordinance should be amended to allow services. That request is under review by the city council.

The addition of more housing at Cedar Grove came up at your meeting. It is my understanding that the contract with MN DEED, which was one of the sources of funds for building Cedar Grove, does not allow multi-family housing. We could ask the State of MN to amend the contract. I have not explored whether there would be any interest or ability, at the state level, to take that action. I have a suggestion for another way forward with more housing at Cedar Grove.

When I began the EDA role in May 2016, eight lots had been sold. Since then, four lots have been sold. Offers have been accepted on four lots this year. Those buyers are all in progress toward closing on the sales.

Based on inquiries that I have received over the past two years for the owner-occupied option, I recommend that we amend the zoning ordinance to allow owner-occupied throughout Cedar Grove. Six of the eight lots that are in the current zone for owner-occupied use on the west side of Cedar Grove have sold.

Over the past two years, a dozen parties have looked at the two lots that remain available for owner-occupied. Eleven of the twelve parties are local property owners and taxpayers that would relocate and either expand or downsize their present live/work situation. None of them were interested in the two lots that are currently available for this purpose. Both of those lots have challenging wetlands and they have not been interested to buyers. I believe that if owner-occupied were allowed on all the lots, we would have sold more lots.

At the September 8, 2020 board meeting of the EDA, it was approved unanimously that I should approach the Grand Marais Planning Commission and City Council to consider allowing owner-occupied use throughout Cedar Grove.

The community of Grand Marais has changed since Cedar Grove was conceived of and built. Attached is a report showing that 22 lots were sold as of 7/6/2006. Only one of those commitments came to fruition. As you no doubt know, Cedar Grove has been surrounded by multiple challenges since inception.

It is widely known that workforce housing is a challenge in Cook County. In addition to allowing owner-occupied throughout Cedar Grove, I recommend we also allow employee housing in the ordinance amendment. We could begin by allowing only employees of the owner's business to ensure more oversight.

I am fully aware of the concerns around more people living at Cedar Grove. These include pedestrians on the street, noise of commercial use, parking, etc. These concerns can be addressed with creative solutions.

1. People with small children are not likely to be attracted to Cedar Grove.
2. If the shoulder of the street is mowed, there is plenty of room to walk.
3. There is a snowmobile trail along the west side of Cedar Grove that could be improved for multiple uses, year-round. A similar trail could be built on the east side.

I have been asked, at Planning and Zoning and the City Council what is the vision of the EDA for Cedar Grove. The EDA does not have a vision statement for Cedar Grove. My understanding is that we are to sell the lots.

I have heard that some city councilors do not want to keep looking at ordinances. I believe that adding this amendment request is the right thing to do right now. The City of Grand Marais is considering amendments to zoning that will allow for more housing. Cedar Grove is not mentioned in those amendments. Perhaps this is a good time to add Cedar Grove to those amendments.

I strongly believe that this is a good time to consider overall zoning for Cedar Grove. Housing and services are in demand and we have property available that could help to meet these needs.

I acknowledge that change is happening at the speed of light these days. None of us need more to do or to think about. As leaders, I thank you for your time and consideration of this request. I look forward to working with you to find the best way forward for the future of our community.

# City of Grand Marais

## MEMO

TO: Grand Marais Planning Commissioners  
FROM: Mike Roth  
DATE: October 1, 2020  
SUBJECT: BDA Zoning Purpose Statement

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### Summary

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At their meeting on September 30, the City Council approved the first reading of Ordinance 2020-02 adding services as a permitted principal use to the BDA zone. During their deliberations it was noted that the vision for the business park has evolved substantially since the zoning was first created. Below is the original (and current) purpose statement included in the ordinance:

#### **19.12 BDA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AREA**

##### **Subdivision 1. Purpose**

It is the purpose of the Business Development Area District to create areas suitable for development of manufacturing, warehousing, and other similar industrial uses which are either: a) uses whose operations are relatively free from objectionable influences; or b) uses whose objectionable features will be minimized or eliminated by design and/or appropriate devices. These uses should be compatible with each other and surrounding land uses.

This statement reflects an understanding of the need for the park that does not agree with the actual demand for space in the park. The City Council believes that the recent request to add services illustrates the need to re-write this purpose statement so that it reflects the current vision for the park. They have directed the Planning Commission to study this, and also determine if any other updates are required hopefully be the end of the year. They expect that the EDA should be involved in the creation of the purpose statement as they are charged with the success of the park on behalf of the City and County.

## Implementation

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1. The EDA discussed the purpose statement and prepares a draft at their next meeting, October 13.
2. The Planning Commission schedules a hearing to consider the new draft amended purpose statement, as well as any other proposed changes, at their November 4 meeting.
3. The Council considers the recommended changes at their November 11 and 25 meetings.

# City of Grand Marais

## MEMO

TO: Grand Marais Planning Commissioners  
FROM: Mike Roth  
DATE: October 1, 2020  
SUBJECT: Housing Zoning Update

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### **Summary**

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At your last meeting you revisited the proposed housing zoning amendments at the request of the City Council to consider the comments received in the last few months. Your discussion led to the desire to spend some time considering what if any changes were warranted recognizing both the public comments and the more than one year of meetings and public interaction that created the draft ordinance. You left the meeting with the direction that commissioners would forward any changes they want to consider to staff for inclusion in this meeting agenda packet. There haven't been any suggested changes as of yet. At your meeting, you can discuss how you want to proceed.