

## **Mayor's Report March 26, 2026**

First, I need to clear up some common misperceptions on what a planning commission does and what they do not do. We can be very proud of our Planning Commissioners and I want to thank them for the work they do. The Planning Commissioners are charged with overseeing our Master Plan and virtually all other plans such as, Parks and Recreation Plan, Economic Development Plan, etc. Because of the importance of the Planning Commissioner role, state law mandates that planning commissioners are appointed by the mayor subject to the approval of city council while most other positions are filled through normal council action.

The Planning Enabling Act 33 of 2008 gives cities the authority to provide for the regulation and subdivision of land. Through public engagement, we decide how we want our city laid out and what activities should go where. We capture that in our Master Plan.

The Zoning Enabling Act 110 of 2006 grants municipalities and counties the right to establish, again through public engagement, zones where different activities would be best suited and it sets guidelines for the protection of public health and safety within those zones. The local zoning ordinance provides the details about property usage and standards for the development of all properties in a city.

When the usage of a commercial property is proposed or changed, a detailed site plan is submitted to the planning commission as required by law. After the detailed site is reviewed by the building official, comments and recommendations are added by the Building Official and forwarded to the Planning Commission for review to determine if the site plan and the usage complies with our zoning ordinance. The planning commissioners are not judging whether they think the business will be successful, would enhance the city, or even if they like or dislike the idea. They compare the site plan to our zoning ordinance to ensure that it meets the standards of the zoning ordinance and align with the planned use of that property. Before they approve a site plan, every detail must be documented so the project is shovel ready to begin construction. If any pieces are missing or there are there are ambiguities in the plan, those need to be addressed and solved before they can approve the plan. Our Planning Commissioners devote countless hours learning about our master plan and zoning ordinance before they even start the process of studying a site plan to consider every detail and how each piece complies and they do all of this work on a volunteer basis. Addressing non-compliance is mandatory, not optional as much as they would like to see a project succeed. That may not seem popular sometimes but it is the law. It is not always easy to make the right decision but the consequences of making the wrong decision far outlive the pain and stress of doing the right thing. I applaud them for their courage. It is not an easy job but it is one of the most important roles in the city.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mayor Gardner