

Meeting Agenda
State College Borough Planning Commission
August 22, 2019
Room 304 / 7:00 p.m.

- I. Call To Order**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Approval Of Minutes**
- IV. Chair Report**
- V. Public Hour - Hearing Of Citizens**
- VI. Community Planning**
 - A. Redevelopment Area Planning - Fairmount Civic District
- VII. Official Reports And Correspondence**
- VIII. Upcoming Meetings**
- IX. Adjournment**

Documents:

[Complete Planning Commission Agenda - August 22, 2019.pdf](#)

**Meeting Agenda
State College Borough Planning Commission
August 22, 2019
Room 304 / 7 p.m.**

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Roll Call**

Zoe Boniface, Chair
Anita Genger, Vice-Chair
Scott Dutt
Jon Eich
Richard Kalin
Mary Madden
Ron Madrid
- III. Approval of Minutes - August 7, 2019**
- IV. Chair Report**
- V. Public Hour - Hearing of Citizens**
- VI. Land Development Plans - None**
- VII. Community Planning**
 - A. Redevelopment Area Planning - Fairmount Civic District

Staff will give a presentation on the steps involved in a Redevelopment Area Plan process, according to the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law (URA). Attached to the agenda, on **pages 8-12**, is a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) regarding Certified Redevelopment Areas and the Planning Commission's role in their designation.

Staff will provide an overview on the details of the redevelopment plan for the Fairmount Civic District, review existing conditions, and begin a discussion on the blighting criteria that exists within this district.

In order to certify a redevelopment area, Planning Commission doesn't need to find that all of the blighting criteria exist within that area; finding of any one of the criteria is sufficient to justify certification. The URA identifies seven conditions which may cause an area to become blighted, including:

- unsafe, unsanitary, or over-crowded conditions of the dwelling,
- inadequate planning of the area,
- excessive land coverage by buildings therein,

- lack of proper light and air and open space,
- defective design and arrangement of the buildings thereon,
- faulty street or lot layout, and
- economically or socially undesirable land uses

Planning Commission Action: The Planning Commission should receive the FAQ sheet from staff and consider which criteria for certification as a redevelopment area are present.

VIII. Land Development Plan(s) - None

IX. Official Reports and Correspondence

A. Borough Council

B. Zoning Hearing Board

1. Variance - 235 Ridge Avenue

On August 13, 2019 the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) heard a request for a variance from Ch. XIX, Section 603.a: "Height, Dwellings not to exceed 25 feet, 2 stories." The property owners wish to remodel the attic of their two-story home to create more living space. The property is located in the R-2 zoning district. A decision is expected at the August 27, 2019 ZHB meeting.

2. Special Exception - 129 South Sparks Street

On August 27, 2019 at Noon, the ZHB will hear a request for a special exception to allow an expansion of an existing office use located at 129 S. Sparks Street Per Ch. XIX, Section 965: Mixed Use District of the zoning ordinance, the ZHB is authorized to grant special exceptions in the mixed-use area of the R-3H district.

3. Variance - 230 South Gill Street

On September 10, 2019 the ZHB will hear a request for a variance concerning encroachment into a side yard setback. Applicants propose to construct a side porch on a very narrow lot. The property is located in the R-2 zoning district.

C. Upcoming Land Development Plans

1. 142 East College Avenue - Preliminary/Final Land Development Plan

D. Staff Updates

X. Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, September 4, 2019 at Noon
Thursday, September 19, 2019 at 7 p.m.

XI. Adjournment

**Meeting Minutes
State College Borough Planning Commission
August 7, 2019**

The State College Borough Planning Commission (PC) met on Wednesday, August 7, 2019 at the State College Municipal Building, 243 S. Allen Street. Zoe Boniface, Chair, called the meeting to order at Noon.

Members Present

Zoe Boniface, Chair; Anita Genger, Vice-Chair; Scott Dutt; and Ron Madrid

Members Absent

Jon Eich; Richard Kalin; and Mary Madden

Others Present

Ed LeClear, Planning Director; Greg Garthe, Senior Planner; Jenna Wargo, Senior Planner-Redevelopment; John Wilson, Zoning Officer; Amy Kerner, Borough Engineer; Mark Saville, HRG Architects; Neil Sullivan, Pennsylvania State University (PSU); Maria Papacharalambous, HOK Architects; and Denise L. Rhoads, Administrative Assistant

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Dutt and seconded by Mr. Madrid to approve the June 5, 2019 meeting minutes as submitted. The vote was unanimously in favor

Chair Report

Zoe Boniface, Chair, had nothing to report.

Public Hour

No comments or concerns were heard during the public hour.

Land Development Plans

Final Plan - Pennsylvania State University Henning Building Replacement Project; UPD Zoning District (Subdistrict 5); The Pennsylvania State University, Owner; Sweetland Engineering, Engineer; HOK Architects, Inc., Architect

Ms. Papacharalambous's presentation included:

- Proposed complete demolition and replacement of PSU's Henning Building since the existing building and infrastructure were at the end of their useful life and

could no longer support the education and research needs of the College of Agricultural Sciences.

- The property was along Shortlidge Road, adjacent to the Agricultural Sciences and Industries Building. The new building would have a similar footprint and a slightly smaller overall building size.
- The existing Henning Building was completed in 1967 and housed the Department of Veterinary and Biomedical Science Departments.
- The site plan had no changes.
- Two stories of laboratories above the first-floor overhang, and the basement would house the library.
- Materials would remain the same; mostly brick with some areas of stone, and grout color to match the brick better.
- Lower level plans showed storage, custodial area, loading dock, dumpsters, etc.
- Level 1 (northside) would house the administration offices, general purpose class rooms with a generous lobby, and lounge area for students.
- Levels 2 & 3 would house more administration offices, and student work spaces in the middle.
- Level 3 would house an open laboratory and a closed conference room.
- Level 4 would house penthouse with all metal panels.
- Full curtain glass wall between the connector to the two buildings.

PC's comments included:

- Ms. Boniface asked about the use of the stone plan on the north facade and Ms. Papacharalambous stated it was because the bids came in very high.
- Ms. Boniface asked if there would be a fence around the ramp area and Ms. Papacharalambous stated there would not be because it was a very flat area.

Design Review Board (DRB) comments:

Mr. Garthe stated the DRB suggested placing benches in the plaza area. Ms. Papacharalambous stated the seating area currently was in the grove area.

Ms. Boniface stated final comments could be made at this time and would be incorporated into the plan review letter.

Final Plan - Pennsylvania State University West Campus Parking Structure and Roadway Connection; UPD Zoning District (Subdistrict 4); The Pennsylvania State University, Owner; Herbert, Rowland, and Grubic, Inc, Engineer; Clayco/FS Architecture, Architects

Mr. Saville and Mr. Sullivan's presentation included:

- Proposed construction of a new parking structure on the West Side of campus to accommodate campus growth.
- Centre Area Transportation Authority bus loop access on the northwest corner to provide bicycle access and storage facilities inside.

- The project involved the demolition of some of the surface parking in West Campus, the extension of White Course Drive to the proposed parking structure, and the development of turn lanes on North Atherton Street.
- The parking deck would have six levels and include a total of 1,651 parking spaces with a net increase of 600 spaces.
- Existing stormwater management facility would be expanded to accommodate a much larger area.
- The design intent was: prepare for a future building with connections, plan ahead for stair towers, and to promote safe pedestrian access across Atherton Street.
- Landscape plan would be to use street tree plantings, add screen plantings, and ground cover in the stormwater management basin area.
- Utilities: minimal load demands, sanitary sewer lines, and water line relocations needed.
- Anticipated the structure would consolidate the surface parking on the West Campus and allow for the construction of future buildings noted in the West Campus Plan.

PC's comments included:

- Mr. Dutt was concerned pedestrians would be crossing the dangerous access path twice. Mr. Saville stated there was an upcoming project, in the design stages, that would direct traffic in a safer path. The intent was still to make this area as safe as possible for pedestrians. Mr. Dutt suggested, in the interim, close access to Atherton Street and direct them to the crossway near the Nittany Lion Inn. Mr. Saville stated there would be an existing walkway and closing the walkway on Atherton Street would be a discussion for PennDOT.
- Mr. Madrid asked about the Traffic Impact Study (TIS), and Mr. Saville stated it was in the final stages of review and had not been approved yet. Mr. LeClear stated that PC approval would be conditional on the outcome of the TIS. Mr. Madrid also asked who would be using the parking lot. Mr. Sullivan stated it would be the College of Engineering, IST, the Liberal Arts building, and faculty and staff. Mr. Madrid asked if there would be a parking attendant and Mr. Sullivan stated it would be automated with gates.
- Ms. Genger asked if there were restrooms on the new deck. Mr. Saville stated there would be one, but it was not a public restroom. Ms. Genger stated, according to the Centre Daily Times, in five years there would be issues again with traffic. Mr. Saville stated the Borough requested some coordination of signal plans and delaying some signals at crosswalk. Mr. LeClear clarified it was PSU, not the Borough who requested this.

Mr. LeClear stated the TIS was a third revision for this area, and at this point there would be a lot of work still to be done by the design team. Mr. Saville stated some issues were environmental such as the flood plain area and it was a lot to take into consideration.

- Mr. Dutt would like to see number of cars turning off of Park Avenue be less.

- Ms. Boniface asked for clarification of Park Smart. Mr. Saville stated it was similar to LEED certification and helped to show how to conserve energy such as providing spaces for electric cars and reducing the energy footprint of the building. Ms. Boniface asked if there had been any discussion of how to handle the increased rain volume in the future. Mr. Saville stated they were looking at conveying an additional 25 years. Ms. Boniface asked if non-PSU people could use the garage after hours and Mr. Saville stated it could be a possibility. Ms. Boniface speculated that Borough streets could become a parking lot and asked if any consideration was given in all the traffic studies. Mr. Saville stated he would pass it along.
- Mr. Madrid stated any deliberation at this point was premature. The question of what the impact on the community would be had not been answered. The PC should have an opportunity to investigate all the negatives that might occur and find a solution. Mr. LeClear stated there had been a meeting with the Neighborhood Coalition, PSU, PennDOT and the Borough and a precedent had been set. Mr. Madrid's final comment was to recall what happened to the Highlands neighborhood when a gas line was put in. He noted this project was similar and the community would rise up and complain.
- Ms. Genger stated the PC should not be voting today without more information.
- Ms. Boniface reminded the members that the Borough had no control over Ferguson Township's comments, opinions, etc. She suggested a possible joint meeting might need to be arranged.

DRB comments:

Mr. Garthe stated the DRB questioned the bicycle traffic during construction.

Public Comment

David Stone, 539 East Foster Avenue, stated he agreed with Mr. Madrid. He noted there was not copy of the West Campus master plan available and it should be made available to the Borough.

Christine Bair, Ferguson Township, stated she was concerned about how this was going to impact the bicycle and pedestrian paths. She noted there were no sidewalks for pedestrians. She would be talking to Ferguson Township to have them install sidewalks. She also noted this was not a bicycle and pedestrian friendly town contrary to other reports.

Eric Boeldt, 400 South Gill Street noted this plan should be for the long-term future. He noted, with the proposed way the traffic would be lined up, the building should not be approved in that location.

Official Reports and Correspondence

Borough Council (BC): Mr. Garthe stated at BC's August 5, 2019 regular meeting, they reviewed the following subdivision and lot consolidation plan: Final Plan: Minor Lot Line Adjustment for 415 Nimitz Avenue and 1282 Smithfield Street Approved

Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB): Variance - 235 Ridge Avenue: Mr. Garthe stated on August 13, 2019 at Noon, the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) would hear a request for a variance from Ch. XIX, Section 603.a: "Height, Dwellings not to exceed 25 feet, 2 stories." The property owners wish to remodel the attic of their two-story home to create more living space. The property is located in the R-2 zoning district.

Special Exception - 129 S. Sparks Street: Mr. Garthe stated on August 27, 2019 at Noon, the ZHB would hear a request for a special exception to allow an expansion of an existing office use located at 129 S. Sparks Street Per Ch. XIX, Section 965: Mixed Use District of the zoning ordinance, the ZHB is authorized to grant special exceptions in the mixed-use area of the R-3H district.

Upcoming Land Development Plans: Received a preliminary/final plan for the proposed Queenstown restaurant at 142 East College Avenue.

Staff Updates: Mr. LeClear reported the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance program passed Council but failed to pass the school board. He also noted the current sign ordinance was distributed for review. Mr. Boeldt stated the DRB should look at the sign ordinance and Mr. LeClear stated he agreed.

Upcoming Meetings

Thursday, August 22, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday, September 4, 2019 at Noon

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Madrid adjourned the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rhoads
Administrative Assistant

Certified Redevelopment Areas

Frequently Asked Questions

August 2019

What is a Certified Redevelopment Area?

The Urban Redevelopment Act (Act 385 of 1945, as amended) is the state law that authorizes a community to designate Redevelopment Areas. A certified redevelopment area (CRA) is any area of the community that the Planning Commission designates or certifies as a redevelopment area. Specifically, the Act refers to a CRA as a "Redevelopment Area," which is defined in the Act as, "any area, whether improved or unimproved, which a planning commission may find to be blighted because of the existence of the conditions enumerated in section two of this act so as to require redevelopment under the provisions of this act."

What criteria can the Planning Commission use to create a CRA?

The Urban Redevelopment Act outlines characteristics of blighted properties, as well as physical, social and economic characteristics of an area that can cause an area to become blighted. The above definition of a Redevelopment Area indicates that a Planning Commission may certify a redevelopment area "because of the existence of the conditions enumerated in section two of this act..." These conditions which may cause property to become blighted include:

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or over-crowded condition of the dwellings therein, or
- Inadequate planning of the area, or
- Excessive land coverage by the buildings thereon, or
- Lack of proper light and air and open space, or
- Defective design and arrangement of the buildings thereon, or faulty street or lot layout, or
- Economically or socially undesirable land uses.

The Urban Redevelopment Act requires that only one of these conditions must exist for an area to be declared as a redevelopment area. Determining if any of these conditions exist is the discretion of the Planning Commission.

How does the Planning Commission determine which areas should be considered for certification as redevelopment areas?

The Urban Redevelopment Act does not contain a specific process that the Planning Commission must follow to identify those areas that will be considered for certification as redevelopment areas. However, in December of 2006, during a special joint meeting of Borough Council, the Planning Commission, and the Redevelopment Authority, the Borough identified areas that could be evaluated as redevelopment areas. This process did not certify these areas, but rather, identified that they were areas that could be considered for certification in the future. Each of these areas was to be analyzed in greater detail to determine which, if any, parts met the criteria for redevelopment areas established in Urban Redevelopment Act.

In 2006, the preliminary map of areas to be considered for CRA designation included the Urban Village, Downtown, the Atherton Street corridor from W. College Avenue to Westerly Parkway, the Atherton Street corridor from Westerly Parkway to the Borough line, and the general area of the Westerly Parkway Plaza and State High campus.

By 2015, the "Garner District", Fraser Centre site and the Allen Street Civic District (highlighted in green) had been formally certified as Redevelopment Areas, and the potential boundary for the Downtown Redevelopment Area had been expanded and refined to include areas along S. Pugh Street and Locust Lane. Other potential Redevelopment Area boundaries had been refined, such as the area of the Westerly Parkway Shopping Center and several areas along the Atherton Street corridor.



Above | Map of certified redevelopment areas (green); potential redevelopment areas (blue) and the Fairmount Civic District Redevelopment Area (yellow).

What are the steps involved for the Planning commission to consider and certify Redevelopment Areas?

As mentioned above, the Urban Redevelopment Law does not contain specific guidance on how this process may take place. Additionally, the Planning Commission has not adopted a procedures manual or formal guidelines that outline the process it uses to determine if an area qualifies as a redevelopment area. However, the process the Planning Commission typically uses includes the following steps:

1. Planning staff identifies a specific subsection of one of the generalized redevelopment areas show on the map for an in-depth analysis.
2. The Planning Commission reviews staff's proposed area and the rationale staff used in setting the boundaries of the subsection. The Planning Commission may take the following actions on staff's proposal: 1) expand or reduce these boundaries, or 2) concur with staff's recommendation.
3. Planning staff then prepares a report regarding the conditions of the area, and provides a recommendation on whether or not one of more of the conditions established in the Urban Redevelopment Act are present in the area being evaluated. As part of the evaluation, planning staff may recommend further adjustments to the boundaries of the potential redevelopment area. This report is received and reviewed by the Planning Commission. At this time the Planning Commission may:
 - a. Accept staff's recommendation and certify all or part of the area as a redevelopment area.
 - b. Reject staff's recommendation and decline to certify all or part of the area as a redevelopment area.
 - c. Send the area under consideration back to planning staff for additional analysis.

Following the certification of any new redevelopment area the Planning Commission, through planning staff, notifies the State College Borough Redevelopment Authority of its action.

If the Planning Commission certifies a Redevelopment Area, what other factors should be considered?

Once a CRA is established by the Planning Commission, the Urban Redevelopment Act indicates that the Planning Commission should prepare a Redevelopment Area Plan for that Area. The Act defines a Redevelopment Area Plan as, "a plan for the redevelopment of all or a part of a redevelopment area made by a planning commission in accordance with the provisions of section ten of this act."

In essence, the statute is saying that it is not enough for the Planning Commission to simply pronounce that an area of the community should be redeveloped. The statute is saying that the Planning Commission must go beyond that and articulate how, in a general way, they believe the area should be redeveloped. Moreover, the statute goes on to provide guidance on what elements must be addressed by the Planning Commission in preparing a redevelopment area plan.

The Urban Redevelopment Act includes the following elements as the minimum content of a redevelopment area plan:

- The planning commission's certification of a redevelopment area shall be made in conformance with its comprehensive general plan (which may include, inter alia, a plan of major traffic arteries and terminals and a land use plan and projected population densities) for the territory under its jurisdiction or for any greater area for which the field of operation of the Authority has been extended under clause (e) of section 3 of this act.
- The planning commission's redevelopment area plan shall include, without being limited to, the following:
 - The boundaries of the area, with a map showing the existing uses of the real property therein;
 - A land use plan of the area showing proposed uses following redevelopment;
 - Standards of population densities, land coverage and building intensities in the proposed redevelopment;
 - A preliminary site plan of the area;
 - A statement of the proposed changes, if any, in zoning ordinances or maps;
 - A statement of any proposed changes in street layouts, street levels, and proposed traffic regulation, including the separation or excluding of vehicular traffic partially or totally from pedestrian traffic;
 - A statement of the extent and effect of the re-housing of families which may be made necessary from the redevelopment area plan, and the manner in which such re-housing may be accomplished;
 - A statement of the estimated cost of acquisition of the redevelopment area, and of all other costs necessary to prepare the area for redevelopment;
 - A statement of such continuing controls as may be deemed necessary to effectuate the purposes of this act.

Are there advantages of creating a Redevelopment Area?

There are two important advantages of creating a Redevelopment Area. The first is that, as a community, we are recognizing that selected areas within our boundaries have not developed in ways that are most advantageous to the community as a whole and to the residents and businesses within the Area. This recognition, through the creation of a Redevelopment Plan for the Area, includes a basic framework for how the community believes the Area should redevelop over time when specific opportunities present themselves. And, as required by the Urban Redevelopment Act, this framework must comply with the community's comprehensive plan, thus ensuring compatibility with the community's overall goals.

The second major advantage of creating a Redevelopment Area is that it allows the Redevelopment Authority to assist in implementing the Redevelopment Area Plan. The purpose of Redevelopment Authorities, according to the Urban Redevelopment Act, is to "engage in the elimination of blighted areas and to plan and contract with private, corporate or governmental redevelopers for their redevelopment..." This purpose statement, when coupled with the powers and duties granted to Redevelopment Authorities by this Act, makes it clear that the Commonwealth believes there is

a need for an entity that can bridge the gap between units of local government and the private sector to facilitate redevelopment in areas that otherwise might experience inadequate or inappropriate redevelopment activities.

A Redevelopment Authority has the ability to acquire blighted properties, create tax increment districts, enter into public-private partnerships, undertake public improvements, assist in the formation of neighborhood improvement districts, and undertake other activities for the purpose of re-planning and redevelopment which maintains the health, safety, convenience, and welfare of citizens and businesses within a Redevelopment Area. By creating a Redevelopment Area, the Planning Commission can help leverage the duties of a Redevelopment Authority to realize community-wide goals.

What are the goals of designating Redevelopment Areas in downtown and other areas of the Borough?

The goal for designating Redevelopment Areas in the Borough is twofold. First, a primary goal is to foster redevelopment in areas of town where opportunities for redevelopment exist. Properties with large surface parking lots, properties with one story buildings where regulations allow multi-story buildings, properties with vacant store fronts, properties with older smaller buildings that could be redeveloped with higher and better uses are examples of potential opportunities for redevelopment within a designated Redevelopment Area. Designating Redevelopment Areas can help encourage redevelopment activity by property owners.

A second goal of designating a Redevelopment Area is to help the Borough to respond to redevelopment initiatives proposed by property owners and public-private partners. Each Redevelopment Area and each potential project must be carefully analyzed to make sure it is beneficial to the property owners and the community and follows adopted community plans.

While the Borough does have the ability to advance these two goals without designating Redevelopment Areas, the options open to the Borough increase with this designation. The most important expansion is the ability of the Redevelopment Authority to participate in redevelopment activities, which in turn provides the community with a greater level of involvement in decisions about redevelopment of parts of the Borough. Although Redevelopment Authorities are not a panacea, they do provide a bridge between the private and public sectors and expand the flexibility available to local government in the redevelopment process.

What are the impacts on properties and individual property rights located in a Redevelopment Area?

There is little quantitative data available on these issues. Studies have been done that suggest property values actually increase following the creation of a Redevelopment Area. These studies hypothesize that this phenomenon is caused by investment in properties in Redevelopment Areas in anticipation of increased public and private investment; these Areas are frequently recipients of expanded public investment, incentives such as tax relief, or state and federal grant money.

The fact that a property is located in a Redevelopment Area has no effect on private property rights. Property owners maintain full ownership of and may continue to use their property within the parameters established by zoning, building and other codes.

It seems that by certifying Redevelopment Areas, we are indicating that areas of the Borough are considered "blighted."

Designating a Redevelopment Area indicates that there are conditions existing in the area that could cause its deterioration, potentially leading to an area becoming blighted, and that redevelopment which meets the community's goals for the area is not able to be achieved through the market alone.

Identifying areas as "blighted," by establishing a Redevelopment Area, is a necessary precondition to open the way for the Redevelopment Authority to participate in development/redevelopment projects. Prior to an amendment to the Urban Redevelopment Act enacted by the Commonwealth in 2004, only cities and counties were permitted to form redevelopment authorities. The 2004 statutory change allowed larger Boroughs, such as State College and West Chester, to establish Redevelopment Authorities. In July 2006, Borough Council created the State College Borough Redevelopment Authority; the RDA was authorized by the Commonwealth to commence operations in April 2007.