

PSA – remove twice per year limit – Jane Hughson's thoughts and comments

Twenty plus years ago we had to stay alert to the Planning and Zoning Commission agenda, reading it on Friday to see what might hit us the following Tuesday. If there was something that we were concerned about we had to: Alert the neighborhood! Call a meeting! Without cell phones or Facebook and with few email addresses, it wasn't easy but we did it.

While serving on the city council 1996-2002, I **tried for years** to get presentations to the neighborhood by the developer before the item appeared on an agenda. There was pushback by the developers and at that time a majority of the council did not agree.

The purpose of the developer presentation was to give the neighborhood an early look at the project. My hope was that perhaps a consensus could be found between the developer and the residents BEFORE the project was totally prepared. By the time it gets to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the issue can become adversarial and earlier discussion could be beneficial.

Fast forward to the Comprehensive Plan committee discussions. The twice a year limit, as I recall, was suggested near the end of that process and there wasn't much discussion about it. The purpose was to look at a number of projects at the same time to see which would be the best for our community.

Please recall that AT THE SAME TIME that the twice a year limit was put in place we also lengthened the process and added a number of notifications. Early PSA announcement at Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council with no action. A presentation to Council of Neighborhood Associations. Neighborhood Commission. Developer presentations to the neighborhood. And now those interested can sign up for alerts of upcoming projects. Removing the twice a year limit would not change this.

Some may recall the first time or two we had the limit in place that we had 10-12 projects apply at once. That means that staff had a lot of work to do in a short period of time. This was when I was on Planning and Zoning Commission and I don't think that we gave the proper amount of time for each due to the volume.

Staff tells us that there have been only 4 PSA requests in the last 2 years. We are no longer seeing the volume that we've seen in the past. Of course that could change...

It has been stated that the limit of twice a year is the cause of slowing down the applications. I believe there are also other major factors in play.

There are few applications for student housing now, likely because there have been a number of projects built in the last few years AND there are at least 5 student housing projects under construction now or will be soon. In addition, the university's growth has slowed a bit. I think new student housing developers see this all of this and know that it may be a while before new projects are needed.

Another factor in the slowdown of projects, per an apartment developer, is our new multi-family building standards. This makes multi-family units more expensive to build, especially cottages.

I'm not sure that staff would know of all instances where the twice a year application limit is keeping developers away because when developers see what the deadline is, they may not contact PADS at all. I don't know of any cases personally, but we heard from Karen Merch during our public hearing that she knows of several.

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council will continue to review each project and determine if a proposed change will benefit our community or not. That process will not change, and the early notifications will continue. We also have regulating plans and the "Pac-Man" review.

With our discussions on Workforce Housing needs, I was concerned that there could be a project we would welcome, but might miss it due to the twice a year limit. There was no ulterior motive and certainly no attempt to encourage bad development.