MINUTES
COLUMBUS PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025 AT 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
123 WASHINGTON STREET
COLUMBUS, INDIANA

Members in Person: Andrew Beckort, Dave Bush, Dennis Baute, Evan Kleinhenz, Chris Bartels, Keerthi Alapati, Laura Garrett, Zack Ellison, and Tom Finke (Bartholomew County Plan Commission Liaison)

Members via Webex: None

Members Absent: Melanie Henderson, Whitney Koelling, and Michael Kinder

Staff in Person: Jeff Bergman, Kyra Behrman, Andres Nieto, Audrey Lewis, Janie Meek, and Austin Whitted (Deputy City Attorney)

Mr. Baute opened the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the November 12, 2025, meeting (Approval and Signing).

Motion: Ms. Garrett made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Alapati seconded the motion. The motion passed with a voice vote of 6 in favor and 0 opposed. Mr. Ellison abstained as he was not present at the November meeting.

Mr. Baute announced that, as a courtesy to the applicant who had team members not yet arrive, the consideration of PP-2025-004, the Columbus Gateway Major Subdivision Preliminary Plat, would be moved down on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION

Mr. Kleinhenz joined the meeting.

DP-2025-007: BarCons FCU - A proposal by Bar-Cons Federal Credit Union for site development plan approval for a new credit union. The property is located at the southwest corner of Stratton Circle and Talley Road, in the City of Columbus.

Ms. Behrman presented for the Planning Department.

Baris Saner with New Ground International and Stacey Foster, President & CEO of Bar-Cons Federal Credit Union, represented the applicant. Mr. Saner stated they are seeking three waivers from the development standards. He stated that the Planning Department's preliminary recommendation was that the criteria for Waiver #1, regarding the building's front setback from Stratton Circle, had been met, but the criteria for the other two waivers were not met. He provided a presentation stating why Waiver #2, regarding drive-thru stacking spaces, and Waiver #3, regarding a projecting sign, also met the criteria and should be approved. He stated, regarding Waiver #2, from a dimensional standpoint, it would be possible to shift the drive-thru area northward approximately 10 feet to meet the standard stacking space size. However, the waiver request is not out of convenience but to improve site safety and clarity at the entrance along Stratton Circle, which is currently aligned with the existing driveway across that street. Mr. Saner stated that if the drive-thru is adjusted to meet the ordinance, they would lose that driveway alignment. Mr. Saner stated that, on average, the drive-thru will have 20 to 25 customers come through

over the course of a day. He added that the likelihood of 5 cars in the drive-thru at the same time would be extremely rare. Mr. Saner stated that Waiver #3, for the height of a sign from the ground, relates to a projecting sign that is part of the building design. The vertical form helps to counterbalance the horizontal presence of the building. It accents the rhythm of the canopy's framework and anchors the building in the landscape. It also creates a visual landmark with a sense of entry and identity. He stated that the role of this sign is more architectural than commercial, and the ordinance would allow a much larger sign than what they are proposing; it would just be farther off the ground. He added that this sign follows the civic identity that is so strong in Columbus. He added that there is no text on this sign, only a symbol that promotes more of the architectural features of the building. This waiver request is to allow the base of the sign to be 3 feet off the ground instead of the required 8 feet. Mr. Saner stated that this element is in a landscape area, not a pedestrian traffic area, therefore not creating a hazardous situation for patrons, which is the primary reason for the 8-foot rule. He stated that the request does support the intent of the CN zoning district by adding design richness. He stated that, above all, this feature helps to make the building recognizable and a welcoming neighborhood destination, not just another office.

Mr. Bush asked what the reasoning was behind having so many parking spaces. Mr. Saner stated that the parking area to the south of the building will be for employees only. The parking lot to the north will be reserved for customers, and he wanted to ensure there was plenty of space for maneuvering, as well as sufficient spaces for when events are held at the location. He added that they are willing to relocate the south, employee-only, parking lot farther west to align with the building, which will result in the loss of a couple of spaces.

Ms. Garrett asked if there were plans for an additional building on this lot. Mr. Saner stated that there were no expansion plans at this time.

Mr. Baute asked if the estimated traffic for the drive-thru window would be approximately 25 vehicles per day. Mr. Saner stated that was correct. Mr. Baute asked how many vehicles they expected per day for customers entering the building. Ms. Foster stated that over the course of a busy day, they may get 30 walk-in customers. She added that they currently serve 5000 customers, most of whom use the online services. Ms. Foster stated that the 25 cars per day for the drive-thru would only be on busy days when the inside is closed.

Mr. Ellison asked if the requirement for projecting signs 8 feet high from the ground was for pedestrian safety. Ms. Behrman stated that it was for safety.

Ms. Garrett asked if this was the same as a free-standing sign. Ms. Behrman stated that it was not, and that the applicant has plans for a free-standing sign as indicated on the submitted site plan - it will be located near the corner of Talley Road and Stratton Circle.

Ms. Garrett asked if the purpose of the additional parking was intended for possible events at the site. Ms. Foster stated that they are trying to increase their membership to grow their business. They are also working to be more engaged with the community by hosting events at their location.

Mr. Bergman asked if their current location had a dedicated community room. Ms. Foster stated that it does not. When designing this building, they had the community in mind and intended to focus on those who are currently underserved. They wanted to have a space that their members could use and that would serve as a boardroom.

Mr. Kleinhenz asked what the maximum number of parking spaces allowed is. Mr. Bergman stated that there isn’t a maximum number, only a minimum requirement. Parking spaces are part of the design review, and the maximum spaces may be ascertained on a case-by-case basis by the Plan Commission through discussion that includes the effects too much parking may have on the surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Baute opened the meeting to public comment.

No one from the public requested to speak.

Mr. Baute closed the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Bergman asked Mr. Beckort if he had any concerns about the driveway alignment mentioned by Mr. Saner. Mr. Beckort stated that he did not have any major concerns regarding that alignment.

Mr. Baute asked if there would be a possibility of getting a traffic signal at Talley Road and 25th Street. Mr. Beckort stated that he would prefer a roundabout at that location.

Mr. Bergman stated that, because this location is zoned CN – Commercial: Neighborhood Center, the ordinance provides design guidelines as well as broad discretion on the part of the Plan Commission to interpret and apply these design guidelines, as well as the other ordinance requirements. In this case, the applicant is asking for 3 modifications, exceptions to what the ordinance would otherwise require. He stated that the Plan Commission would need to vote separately on each modification request, as well as a final vote on the proposal as a whole, keeping the outcome of the modifications in mind, for a total of 4 votes.

Mr. Bergman stated that to approve the modification requests at least 1 of the 3 criteria outlined in the staff report must be met for each request.

Mr. Bergman stated that with requested Waiver #1, Front Setback, the applicant proposes to exceed the required maximum 10-foot front setback from Stratton Circle, by 151.25 feet, resulting in a setback of up to 161.25 feet. Section 3.18(C) of the Zoning Ordinance indicates that the maximum front setback shall be 10 feet for primary structures that front on a Local Street in the CN (Commercial: Neighborhood) zoning district. Staff supports approval of this modification, finding that criteria #3 has been met, as it is in keeping with the character of the area as recommended by the Comprehensive Plan.

Motion: Mr. Bush made a motion to approve modification request #1, agreeing with staff findings that criteria #3 has been met. Ms. Garrett seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 8 in favor and 0 opposed.

Mr. Bergman stated that with requested Waiver #2, Stacking Spaces, the applicant proposes to reduce the dimensions of stacking spaces for a drive-up facility from 20-feet by 10-feet to 18-feet by 10-feet. Mr. Bergman stated that, in the staff report, denial of this modification was recommended, finding that no criteria were met. However, based on the applicant's presentation, he believes that there is merit in aligning the drives and supports approval of this modification, finding that criteria #3 has been met by better serving the context and circulation amongst the lots.

Mr. Bush asked if it states in the Zoning Ordinance that stacking spaces are not allowed to be located in any type of traffic or circulation lane. Mr. Bergman stated that the issue is that the 5th stacking space would encroach by a few feet into the circulation area of the parking spaces, which the Zoning Ordinance prohibits. Mr. Bush stated that it appears the entire building could be pushed south up to 4 feet, resolving that encroachment. Mr. Saner stated that they are likely to need the southern portion of the lot for landscaping purposes and dumpster enclosure space.

Motion: Mr. Bush made a motion to approve modification request #2, agreeing with Mr. Bergman's suggested finding that criteria #3 has been met. Ms. Garrett seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 8 in favor and 0 opposed.

Mr. Bergman stated that with requested Waiver #3, Projecting Sign Height, the applicant proposes to allow a projecting sign to be 3 feet from grade level, 5 feet less than the required 8 feet. Mr. Bergman stated that the reason for this requirement was mainly to ensure that a passing pedestrian, when walking along a sidewalk, doesn't hit their head on the sign, and that there is good visibility. In this situation, the sign base is in a landscape area, so the probability of a pedestrian hitting their head is unlikely. Mr. Bergman stated that the challenge with the criteria is to find out whether the modification better serves the area. The concern is that this sets a precedent or provides an example for future projecting signs to be in a landscape area to get a free-standing sign on a property where it would not otherwise be allowed. However, Mr. Bergman noted Mr. Saner's description of the sign as part of the architecture of the

building. This community likes to see thoughtful design and does try to be somewhat hands-off in those circumstances. Mr. Bergman stated he is inclined to honor the architectural design values of the community and recommend approval of this modification, finding that criteria #1 and #2 are met, in that the modification better serves the intent of the sign regulations and better serves the intent of the CN zoning district by providing an architectural component that improves wayfinding to the building entrance and adds vibrancy to the character of the area.

Ms. Garrett stated that she was concerned that approval of this sign would open the door to large interstate-type signs in this area. She added that those types of signs should not be permitted in such a residential area. She asked if the sign would be allowed to be this tall if it were not attached to the building. Mr. Bergman stated that in this zoning district, freestanding signs are allowed, but they may not be over 6 feet in height. He added that the ordinance allows for the projecting sign in place of a freestanding sign. A projecting sign can be up to 10 feet above the roof line of the building to which it is attached. Mr. Bergman added that the applicant is committed to what they have presented to the Plan Commission in terms of height and area of the sign.

Mr. Kleinhenz asked if that meant there would be no lettering on the sign. Mr. Bergman stated that content is not regulated, but only the height and area of the sign can be regulated.

Mr. Bush asked if the sign was illuminated. Mr. Saner stated that it would be backlit only. Mr. Bush asked if 10 feet above the roof line was the maximum height for a projecting sign. Mr. Bergman stated that it is the maximum height. Mr. Bush asked what the maximum roof height was for this zoning district. Mr. Bergman stated that the maximum roof height for the primary structure in this zoning district is 35 feet. Mr. Kleinhenz stated that, potentially, there could be a 45-foot projecting sign in this zoning district. Ms. Garrett stated that she is worried about that. Mr. Kleinhenz stated that the ordinance already allows that height for a projecting sign. The only thing they are requesting a modification from is the height off the ground. Mr. Bergman stated that the modification is for the height off the ground, but the discretion that the Plan Commission has in the CN zoning district allows the commission to weigh in on the sign overall, regardless of the modification request.

Mr. Kleinhenz asked, if the applicant was following the ordinance requirements, would their request have come before the Plan Commission. Mr. Bergman stated that they would not have had to request the modification, but because it is in the CN zoning district, the overall site and building design would come before the Plan Commission for approval.

Ms. Alapati asked if there were limitations on the sign area in this zoning district. Mr. Bush stated that the maximum square footage area is 100 square feet in this zoning district, according to the staff report.

There was much discussion amongst the Plan Commission members about the lighting of the sign.

Motion: Mr. Ellison made a motion to approve modification request #3 with the condition that the sign would not be lit in any way. He agreed with the staff findings that criteria #1 & #2 have been met. Mr. Bartels seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 6 in favor and 2 opposed. Ms. Garrett and Mr. Kleinhenz voted no.

Mr. Bergman stated that the staff recommends approval of **DP-2025-007**. Any approval should include the following conditions:

1. The area of both front walls shall be provided in order to verify allowed wall sign area, as well as the presence of windows consistent with the design guidelines.
2. On Sheet C500, the Structure Legend shall be completed.
3. On Sheet A701, the specification detail for the bicycle racks shall indicate 3 feet of separation between racks to meet the requirements of Zoning Ordinance Section 7.1 Part 2(C)(3). Also, the sign measurements shall be corrected to indicate a sign area of 50 square feet for the freestanding sign and 36 square feet for the projecting sign.
4. On Sheet A702, it is indicated that the HVAC equipment will be screened with landscaping, but none is shown on the landscaping plan (Sheet LS1). Screening for these ground-

mounted units is not required. The appropriate drawing shall be updated for consistency and clarity.

5. Consistent with the design guideline regarding parking lot location, the parking area on the south side of the building shall be reduced or relocated so that it is no closer to Talley Road than the front wall of the building.
6. Approval is contingent upon the City Engineer's approval of plans for stormwater management, if the disturbed area is less than one acre.

Motion: Mr. Bush made a motion to approve **DP-2025-007**, noting the modification requests, and with the conditions recommended by staff. Ms. Alapati seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 8 in favor and 0 opposed.

OLD BUSINESS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION

PP-2025-004: Columbus Gateway Major Subdivision Preliminary Plat – A request by Midland Atlantic Properties for preliminary plat approval to create 7 lots and 1 common area over +/- 20.73 acres. The property is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of State Road 46/Jonathan Moore Pike and Interstate 65, in the City of Columbus.

Mr. Ellison stated he is a Trustee of Columbus Regional Health, the current property owner, and recused himself. Mr. Ellison left the meeting room.

Mr. Nieto presented for the Planning Department.

Mr. Bush asked if a newly added access easement was only intended for internal circulation and not to connect with Jonathan Moore Pike.

Sam Boyle with Midland Atlantic, Coleman Boyle with Midland Atlantic, and Conner Strege with Kimley-Horn represented the applicant.

Mr. Sam Boyle stated that they are in negotiations with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to connect that access easement to Jonathan Moore Pike/State Road 46. Mr. Conner Boyle added that they are proposing a right turn only exit for that location.

Mr. Bush asked if that was part of this preliminary plat request. Mr. Sam Boyle replied that it was added after the initial Plan Commission meeting. They have received feedback from INDOT indicating that a right-out-only could be pursued in this location. Mr. Strege stated that the proposed right-turn-only exit is the only acceptable location for a second State Road 46 access by INDOT.

Mr. Sam Boyle stated that they received feedback from INDOT regarding their left turn lane at Johnson Boulevard. INDOT is requiring that the left turn lane length to be increased from what was originally planned. Part of their sidewalk modification request for along the east side of Johnson Boulevard is to accommodate the original left turn lane. With the additional length INDOT is requiring they will need even more relief from the sidewalk installation to accommodate the extended turn lane.

There was much discussion amongst the Plan Commission and staff regarding sidewalks, crosswalks, and the installation of a connecting road coming from the east in the future. They also discussed the type of turnaround for the dead-end and the private drive with the right-out-only connection to State Road 46/Jonathan Moore Pike.

Mr. Sam Boyle asked if the Plan Commission could commit to no buffer requirement on any of the lots. Mr. Bergman stated that they could not make that commitment at this time and that question would be addressed as the site plan for each lot in the development is reviewed. Mr. Bergman stated that, in the event a business decided to front their store onto the internal road and have their electrical equipment, drive-up, dumpster, loading docks, and similar features facing State Road 46, a buffer would likely be required. Mr. Kleinhenz stated that, if the building is laid out on the lot so as not to have any of those

types of items facing either one of the streets, a buffer would not be required. Mr. Bush added that if their end users make their lots aesthetically pleasing, the Plan Commission likely won't require a buffer.

Mr. Baute opened the meeting to public comment.

No one from the public requested to speak.

Mr. Baute closed the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Bergman stated that the Commission would first vote on the requested modifications and then vote on the request as a whole. He stated there are 5 criteria, and all 5 of those criteria must be met to approve the modification. The criteria are as follows:

Criteria #1: The modification will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, and general welfare.
Criteria #2: Adjacent property will not be adversely affected.
Criteria #3: The modification is justified because of exceptional topographic or other physical conditions unique to the property involved, as opposed to mere inconvenience or financial disadvantage.
Criteria #4: The modification is consistent with the intent of this (the Subdivision Control Ordinance) and other applicable ordinances and the Comprehensive Plan.
Criteria #5: The modification will not conflict with the requirements of the zoning ordinance, including but not limited to lot area, lot frontage, lot width, and setback(s).

Modification #1 (Dead-end Length): The applicant proposes Gateway Trail to be a dead-end street +/- 1,125 feet in length. Table 16.24-1 of the Subdivision Control Ordinance states that cul-de-sacs (dead-ends) shall be a maximum length of 650 feet.

Mr. Bergman stated that the staff recommends approval, finding that all criteria have been met primarily due to the context of the site and lack of street connection options beyond this property.

Motion: Ms. Garrett made a motion to approve the modification request for the dead-end street length to be up to 1,125 feet. She agreed with the staff findings listed in the staff report. Mr. Bush seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.

Modification #2 (Cul-de-sac Design): The applicant proposes a permanent dead-end with a hammerhead turnaround for Gateway Trail instead of the typical cul-de-sac design. Section 16.24.030(F) of the Subdivision Control Ordinance states that permanent dead-end streets without a cul-de-sac shall not be permitted.

Mr. Bergman stated that the staff recommends denial of this modification, finding that Criteria #3 has not been met – that there are no unique topographic or physical conditions to justify it.

Mr. Kleinhenz asked the applicant to comment on the requested modification. Mr. Sam Boyle stated their motivation was financial, due to the cost of grading for and construction of the cul-de-sac.

Motion: Mr. Bush made a motion to deny the modification request to create a permanent dead-end with a hammerhead turn-around instead of a cul-de-sac. He agreed with staff findings that criteria #3 has not been met. Ms. Garrett seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.

Modification #3 (Sidewalk Installation): The applicant proposes an approximately 260-foot long portion (east side) of the newly proposed Johnson Boulevard to not include a sidewalk. Sections 16.24.030(B) and 16.24.060(A) of the Subdivision Control Ordinance state that sidewalks shall be installed along both sides of all streets.

Mr. Bergman stated that the staff recommends approval of this modification, with the sidewalk to be omitted along the east side of Johnson Boulevard between the planned intersection of the new street coming from the east and State Road 46, finding that all criteria have been met.

Motion: Ms. Garrett made a motion to approve modification request #3 to omit the sidewalk along the east side of Johnson Boulevard between the planned intersection of the new street coming from the east and State Road 46, agreeing with the staff's findings that all criteria have been met. Mr. Bush seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.

Mr. Bergman stated that the staff supports approval of this request, keeping the modifications in mind, and including the following required revisions as part of the plat approval:

1. Sheet C1.0 – Preliminary Plat:
   a. Johnson Boulevard shall not be labeled as "N" or "North".
   b. The full extent of all existing and proposed areas of "no access" from adjacent streets, especially Jonathan Moore Pike, shall be clearly, graphically indicated.
2. Sheet C2.0 – Typical Street Sections:
   a. Johnson Boulevard shall not be labeled as "N" or "North".
3. Sheet C3.0 – Development Plan:
   a. Johnson Boulevard shall not be labeled as "N" or "North".
   b. The full extent of all existing and proposed areas of "no access" from adjacent streets, especially Jonathan Moore Pike, shall be clearly, graphically indicated.
   c. The sidewalk extension from Gateway Trail to the People Trail to the west shall be platted within a minimum 15-foot wide public access easement. The sidewalk itself shall be designed to include curves, rather than 90-degree or other sharp corners unsuitable to its intended users.
4. The relocated portion of the People Trail, including its easement, shall not be at less than an elevation of 618 feet, its approximate elevation in the area proposed to be vacated.
1. The dead-end of Gateway Trail shall be re-designed as a cul-de-sac meeting the requirements of the Subdivision Control Ordinance.

Motion: Mr. Bush made a motion to approve **PP-2025-004** subject to the revisions as recommended by Mr. Bergman. Ms. Garrett seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 7 in favor and 0 opposed.

Mr. Ellison returned to the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION

PC-25-1: 8th & Hutchins Rezoning – A proposal by the Planning Department to rezone +/-1.26 acres from CN (Commercial: Neighborhood) to RE (Residential: Established). The properties are generally located along Maple Street, Hutchins Avenue, and Cottage Avenue between 8th and 10th Streets, in the City of Columbus.

Ms. Lewis presented for the Planning Department.

Mr. Bergman stated that 2 gentlemen who had to leave the meeting early live in the rezoning area and wanted to ensure that this would not interrupt the residential use of their property. Mr. Bergman told them that it would not.

Mr. Baute opened the meeting to public comment.

No one from the public requested to speak.

Mr. Baute closed the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Bergman stated that this is the second of this type of request initiated by the Planning Department. He stated that he hopes to continue to review other areas of the city that may also require a change, as the department has the time to do so. The staff supports a favorable recommendation to the City Council for this rezoning request.

Motion: Ms. Garrett made a motion to send a favorable recommendation to City Council for **PC-25-1**. Ms. Alapati seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 8 in favor and 0 opposed.

ADOPTION OF THE 2026 PLAN COMMISSION CALENDAR

Mr. Bergman presented the 2026 Plan Commission Calendar.

Motion: Ms. Garrett made a motion to approve the 2026 Plan Commission calendar. Mr. Ellison seconded the motion. The motion passed with a voice vote of 8 in favor and 0 opposed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS / DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Whitted discussed the Annual Conflict of Interest disclosure forms.

Mr. Ellison and Ms. Garrett were named the Nominating Committee for the 2026 Plan Commission officers.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:33 p.m.

Motion: Ms. Garrett made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Ellison seconded the motion. The motion passed with a voice vote of 8 in favor and 0 opposed.

These minutes were approved at the Plan Commission meeting on February 11, 2026.

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Michael Kinder, President Laura Garrett, Secretary