

**MINUTES
COLUMBUS PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026 AT 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
123 WASHINGTON STREET
COLUMBUS, INDIANA**

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

Members via Webex: None

Members Absent: None

Staff in Person: Jeff Bergman, Melissa Begley, Jessie Boshell, Janie Meek, and Austin Whitted (Deputy City Attorney)

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the February 11, 2026 meeting. (Approval and Signing).

Motion: Mr. Ellison made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Garrett seconded the motion. The motion passed with a voice vote of 10 in favor and 0 opposed.

OLD BUSINESS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION

None

NEW BUSINESS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION

PC-26-3: Volunteers of America Rezoning— A request by Volunteers of America to rezone 0.61 acres from PUD (Planned Unit Development) to RM (Residential: Multi-Family). The property is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of 14th Street and Hutchins Avenue, in the City of Columbus.

Ms. Begley presented for the Planning Department.

Chloe Engleking, Development Associate with Volunteers of America, represented the applicant. She stated that the formal name for this development is Hutchins Crossing. She added that this will be a 2-story 17-unit building. She stated that they have spoken to the surrounding property owners regarding their plans, and everyone has stated that they are in support of this request.

Mr. Bush asked who currently owns the site. Ms. Engleking stated that it is currently owned by United Way. Mr. Bush asked if United Way's parking is sufficient enough that they will not require this area for future parking needs. Ms. Engleking stated that the majority of the residents of this property will not have cars, so they will be requesting a variance to decrease the parking requirement for this project when that time comes. Mr. Bush asked if this would be market-rate or subsidized housing. Ms. Engleking stated it would be affordable housing.

Mr. Bergman stated that the Planning Department has been in communication with United Way regarding parking and United Way felt that there would be ample parking for United Way's needs. This appears to be consistent with the Zoning Ordinance parking requirements.

Mr. Bush asked if a change of ownership would take place. Ms. Engleking stated that if this request is approved, there will be a purchase agreement implemented.

Mr. Kinder opened the meeting to public comment.

No one from the public requested to speak.

Mr. Kinder closed the meeting to public comment.

Mr. Bergman asked Ms. Engleking about the staff's recommended commitments listed in the staff report. One mentions the orientation of the building on the lot, and another mentions the sidewalk along 14th Street. Ms. Engleking stated that she has no concerns with either of those commitments.

Mr. Bergman stated that the staff supports a favorable recommendation being sent to the City Council for this request, subject to the two commitments as listed in the staff report. He added that these commitments are similar to those for other multi-family residential rezonings in this area.

Mr. Bartels asked if the development would have some green space on it. Ms. Engleking stated that it would. Mr. Bartles asked if the tenants would be those who are struggling to find housing, and whether it would be pet-friendly. Ms. Engleking answered yes to both.

Motion: Mr. Bush made a motion to send a favorable recommendation to the City Council for this request, including the commitments recommended by the staff as written in the staff report. Ms. Garrett seconded the motion. The motion passed with a ballot vote of 10 in favor and 0 opposed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS / DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Discussion of Columbus Zoning Ordinance Revisions: Build-to-Rent Developments & Procedures

Mr. Boshell and Mr. Bergman presented for the Planning Department.

Mr. Boshell provided a presentation on build-to-rent communities, including their appeal to builders, investors, and consumers. He noted a particular concern with build-to-rent communities being that they could result in a neighborhood of single-family homes regulated like an apartment complex, with no public streets.

Mr. Bergman stated that the staff's current proposal would require developments of single or two-family structures that exceed 12 units to provide public streets and sidewalks.

There was much discussion among the Commission members and staff regarding lot division, long-term rentals, future sale of individual home sites, the role of utilities and taxes, infrastructure requirements, and emergency vehicle access.

Mr. Bush stated he would want the regulations to prevent a developer from circumventing the rules and creating a large development of multiple 12-unit home clusters.

By consensus, the Commission agreed with the staff's approach of setting a threshold for public streets at 12 units in single or duplex structures in a development.

Mr. Bergman stated that, with regard to the zoning compliance certificate process, the Zoning Ordinance currently treats all development the same, subject to the same set of requirements. The only exceptions are single and two-unit structures, which may be reviewed for zoning compliance by the County in association with the building permit.

Mr. Bergman stated the staff's proposal is to retain this process for single and two-unit structures, but sort other types of development by complexity and establish permitting requirements matching those development types. He stated that requirements would be reduced for residential developments of 12 units or less and for small additions or site changes for any other project type. Mr. Bergman added that the staff has administratively created a foundation-only permit process to aid with the urgency of industrial projects and the intent would be to include that process in the zoning ordinance as well.

Mr. Bartels asked about stormwater requirements. Mr. Beckort stated an engineer would still be required to sign off, but certain items may not be needed initially for projects involving 1-acre or less.

Ms. Garrett asked about photometric requirements. Mr. Bergman stated that a 90-degree cut-off light fixture is still required, but smaller projects would not be required the task of providing light fixture specifications up-front.

Mr. Bush asked about sidewalk information that is proposed to be omitted for smaller projects. Mr. Bergman stated that question is tied to whether the Commission wanted to exempt small residential projects from the current sidewalk requirement.

Mr. Bergman noted that one of the biggest changes is the introduction of a zoning exhibit compared to a certified site plan. Currently, all projects require a certified site plan, which must include the professional stamp of an architect, engineer, landscape architect, or land surveyor. The proposed zoning exhibit would not have that same requirement if the information is clearly presented and proper measurements are provided, saving small projects notable time and expense.

Mr. Ellison left the meeting.

By consensus the Commission members expressed support for the staff's approach.

ADJOURNMENT: 5:57 p.m.

Motion: Mr. Baute made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Alapati seconded the motion. The motion passed with a voice vote of 9 in favor and 0 opposed.

These minutes were approved at the Plan Commission meeting on April 8, 2026.

Michael Kinder, President

Laura Garrett, Secretary