

LEWISTON CITY COUNCIL

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

SESSION WILL BE CONDUCTED REMOTELY AND MEMBERS WILL ONLY PARTICIPATE ELECTRONICALLY. THE MEETING CAN BE VIEWED ONLINE AT <https://www.lewistonmaine.gov/2020cc>

Public Comment on any item appearing on the agenda may be sent to publiccomment@lewistonmaine.gov prior to or during the meeting, and all comments received will be forwarded to the City Council. People who would like to access the meeting by phone only may contact (207) 513-3124 for the access code before 4:30pm on the day of the meeting.

6:00 pm Workshop

WORK SESSION

1. Economic Development Discussion – 45 minutes
2. 70 Blake Street Zoning Discussion – 30 minutes

LEWISTON CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP AGENDA
TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2020
6:00 PM

1. Economic Development Discussion – 45 minutes

At our June 16, 2020 Workshop staff presented information on the City's current economic development strategies, and opportunities the City could pursue to continue building our local economy. At this workshop staff solicited feedback from the City Council on developing an economic development plan. Staff will present a draft plan providing a recommendation of five targeted strategies with notable action steps the City can focus on.

2. 70 Blake St. Zoning Request Discussion – 30 minutes

Staff will present information on a proposal to rezone 70 Blake St and the surrounding neighborhood from Downtown (DR) to Centreville (CV).

Economic and Community Development

Misty Parker

Economic Development Manager



To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Misty Parker
RE: Lewiston Economic Development Plan
Date: 8/5/20

In June the staff presented information on economic development opportunities the City could pursue and solicited feedback from City Council on direction for developing an economic development plan. Enclosed is a draft plan providing a recommendation of five targeted strategies with notable action steps the City can focus on to continue building our local economy. This comprehensive approach requires collaboration within City Departments as well as community organizations in order to further build a strong local economy that is attractive to businesses and residents.

The five strategic areas focus on:

- 1) **A vibrant downtown.** The past decade of focus here has already demonstrated the economic driver a downtown can be, attracting over \$120 million in private investment and creating nearly 700 new jobs in the community. This strategy builds off our successes and looks to impactful actions that will continue toward building a vibrant downtown.
- 2) **Supporting existing businesses.** Businesses who have already invested in the community are far more likely to grow and continue investing in the community if they have access to the resources needed to do so. By targeting efforts to support their success here in the community we will create an environment where they can thrive and is desirable to grow.
- 3) **Business Attraction.** In order for Lewiston to diversify its tax base and build a strong economy, attracting new businesses are critical. Business attraction is often one of the most expensive economic development strategies a community can pursue. Investing in a targeted, strategic approach to this strategy will ensure a higher potential for success.
- 4) **Workforce development.** Ensuring businesses in Lewiston have the resources needed to grow includes the talent and skilled labor to fill their positions. Additionally, residents should have access to the high quality jobs within their own community. Building a workforce development

system here that meets both these needs ensures Lewiston will be a leading community for attracting and keeping businesses and residents.

- 5) **Community Development.** There is a lot that can be done through traditional economic development tools to attract and grow businesses. However, creating a desirable community that anyone would choose to be in accelerates the success of those efforts. This strategy focuses on actions and investment in amenities that will continue building Lewiston as a quality place to live, work, and invest in.

The plan presented tonight is draft form. Feedback from this workshop will allow us to finalize these strategies, develop metrics for each strategy and performance measures to evaluate the progress of this plan, identify additional partners needed, and resources required to successfully implement the plan.

Draft

City of Lewiston Economic Development Plan

8-11-20

Strategy 1: Continue developing a vibrant downtown attractive to consumers, businesses, and investors.

Over the last 10 years, Lewiston's downtown has benefited from over \$120 million in private sector funding, revitalizing nearly 500,000 s.f. of commercial space, adding approximately 700 new jobs, and preserving historic buildings that define the rich history and story of our community. Nationally, vibrant downtowns are recognized as key factor in a community's economic growth. Revitalized downtowns yield higher tax revenues per acre and where communities have already invested in infrastructure; they add people and talent in a concentrated area; and create jobs. Since 2010 the City has invested significantly in the downtown through the Riverfront Island Master Plan (RIMP) and target efforts along Lisbon Street and Main Street. This has yielded significant success but much work remains. Strategy 1 focuses on actionable steps the City and partners can take to continue and accelerate this work.

- a) Develop an omnibus TIF district to fund the revolving commercial loan program to support gap funding for building rehabs in the target area that create new commercial space and market rate residential units. Additionally, under the omnibus district the Council will have the authority to enter into individual credit enhancement agreements (CEA) for individual projects where they warrant the project meets the objectives of this plan, the comp plan, RIMP, or Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan and CEA funding is needed to make the project viable.
- b) Re-establish CDBG rehab and economic development loan programs to support affordable residential units, job creation, job retention, historic preservation, and/or eliminates blight. As an entitlement community, the City receives Community Development Block Grant funding each year to be used for various activities, including economic development. These funds have supported rehabilitation of vacant and blighted downtown buildings for residential and commercial uses, stimulating economic opportunities and increasing the tax base. Additionally, the funds have supported job creation through expansion of existing businesses and provided much needed assistance to new and successful businesses. Currently, CDBG funds are helping businesses with operating costs to mitigate losses due to COVID-19. Although this assistance is key for ensuring business survival during these unprecedented times, CDBG funds will be once again be available post-pandemic to assist with continued economic growth and rehabilitation of underutilized buildings.
- c) Support entrepreneurship opportunities in the downtown through the existing LA Top Gun program, micro-enterprise CDBG loan program, Technical Assistance program, co-working space, and site selection services. Emerging business owners often need a variety of supports including, but not limited to, access to financial resources, business plan development, and creative space needs. By supporting technical assistance and loan programs targeting startups and microenterprise business owners, the City can actively

create economic opportunities for residents and attract new potential business owners and residents. Since 2017, the Top Gun program has been assisting entrepreneurs with all aspects of the business process, including how to pitch a business idea to potential funders and how to scale existing businesses up in a sustainable way.

- d) Invest in downtown beautification and infrastructure improvement. Creating spaces where people want to interact and engage leads to increased economic success. Providing quality infrastructure investments create an environment in which businesses are comfortable investing and can operate efficiently. Infrastructure creates environments that are safe, comfortable, and attractive for businesses to operate. In downtown areas businesses can control the experience of their patrons inside their business however, the experience of their patrons outside their business is up to the City. Creating a safe, attractive, comfortable environment attracts patrons to the downtown and positive experiences ensure they come back as well as spend more time and more money downtown. Since 2018 significant efforts between the Downtown Lewiston Association, local businesses and the City have leveraged resources to take small efforts toward creating more inviting public spaces downtown that have had significant impact. These efforts include decorative seasonal banners on light posts, additions of flower gardens in tree wells, and new holiday lighting. These efforts have yielded increased activity and positive perceptions of the downtown. By fostering these partnerships and investing in improvements, the City will continue to gain ~~notoriety~~ recognition as an interesting place to eat, explore, and enjoy.
- i. Invest in high quality planters at key gateways to enhance the experience of visiting the downtown;
 - ii. Add low cost decorative lighting to key pedestrian areas to improve aesthetics and safety for pedestrians;
 - iii. Support public art opportunities in the downtown in partnership with LA Public Arts Committee through implementation of the public art plan and proposals for resident led groups like Union of Maine Visual Arts.
 - iv. Increase wayfinding signage where needed.
 - v. Develop policy to allow non-profits and for profit businesses to sponsor decorative banners and installation. City will need to fund permanent brackets.
 - vi. Support development of holiday lights plan and partnership with Downtown Lewiston Association to expand holiday lighting opportunity.
 - vii. Continue partnership with DLA to expand the adopt a spot program.
 - viii. Install paid parking on Lisbon Street
 - ix. Hire private security or parking management company to oversee parking garages to ensure a safe, clean welcoming environment, as well as improve collection of parking fees.
 - x. Public Safety: Short term, continue police department foot beat patrols in the downtown where officers can work with local businesses to address concerns as well as support a safe, welcoming experience for patrons. Long term, work with the police department to identify issues impacting the downtown and partner with state, federal and community organizations to

develop strategies addressing root causes of issues impacting the downtown.

- xi. Streamline permitting processes to create easier access to opportunities for outside dining and street closures for ED purposes.

Strategy 2: Support existing businesses.

A majority of economic growth and investment in Lewiston comes from existing businesses. Proactively connecting to existing businesses to understand and respond to their needs as well as using this knowledge to connect businesses to new opportunities will ensure a strong, attractive economic landscape for businesses to thrive in Lewiston.

- a) Re-establish Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) program as a whole City initiative, led by Economic Development. A majority of economic growth and investment in Lewiston comes from existing businesses. The Economic Development department frequently works with existing businesses within the City to identify areas for investment including workforce training and infrastructure. However, sometimes a serious issue does not reach the City's knowledge until well into the process, limiting options for City assistance. By identifying the needs of existing businesses in a proactive and deliberate way, the City can assist with immediate issues, mitigate barriers to development, and support business growth in both emerging and established sectors.
 - i. Identify sectors and business to reach each year
 - ii. Identify key questions and supports
 - iii. Establish visitation team representing multiple partners
 - iv. Establish benchmarks for # of business visits each month
- b) Utilize existing business to business (B2B) services to engage with entities with varied economic interests in the area. Although the BEAR program will provide opportunities for formal engagement with business owners, networking opportunities provided by the Chamber and other entities allow ED staff to help Lewiston businesses connect to new markets, clients, and vendors within the City and region.
 - i. Work with LA Metro Chamber of Commerce to identify b2b opportunities to make introductions.
 - ii. Identify additional opportunities for networking, such as Maine Women's Network.
- c) Foster relationships with business owners who are members of Lewiston's immigrant communities. The Economic Development Department recognizes the important role of immigrant-owned businesses in our community. By intentionally increasing outreach efforts, the department can utilize the knowledge and expertise of business owners to identify additional opportunities for economic growth.

Strategy 3: Business Attraction- market Lewiston to new businesses and developers

While supporting existing businesses utilize the lowest amount of resources for the highest economic gain, focus also needs to be on attracting new businesses to Lewiston to ensure growth, diversity of the

tax base, and economic resiliency. As one of the most expensive economic development strategies it is critical for the City to be strategic and targeted in order to realize the greatest results with limited resources.

- a) Conduct market study and identify 3 sectors to target based on projected growth
- b) Establish and maintain business visitation program
- c) Uniformly offer to all potential new projects department scoping meetings to review and provide feedback early on in the process.
- d) Solicit developers 1-2 times a year to share what Lewiston is doing and welcome feedback on barriers to development. Create targeted marketing material with recent projects and incentives available
- e) Build-out the entrepreneurship action identified in Strategy 1 to roll out city wide entrepreneurship effort.
- f) Define incentives and marketing package
- g) Utilize consultant services during specific times or for specific projects when additional capacity or specialized knowledge is needed.
- h) Develop city wide prospectus to encourage investment. This should be coupled with marketing package and produced by marketing and design professionals with ED staff providing content and direction.
- i) Support implementation of Local Foods Local Places plan.
- j) Create resource lists and flowcharts for city development processes to create greater accessibility and transparency for developers and business owners, with a focus on accessibility for potential business owners for whom English is not a first language.

Strategy 4: Workforce Development

Prior to the pandemic, Maine was experiencing a workforce shortage. Post Covid-19 it is believed this will likely still be a limiting factor in our economy. However, the scale of this is still uncertain. Lewiston has been successful in attracting businesses that provide high quality jobs however, our residents are not connecting to these higher wage jobs. Lewiston's median income (\$40,669) is approximately \$13,000 lower than Androscoggin County (\$53,285) as a whole. Focus needs to be connecting residents to educational and training opportunities in sectors with career trajectories and potential for economic mobility.

- a) Support Strengthen LA and existing workforce development opportunities to ensure residents are connected to jobs in the community and career pathways. Partners include Western Maine Community Action, CareerCenter, Community Concepts Inc, LA Metro Chamber, John T Gorman Foundation, Eastern Maine Development Center, Central Maine Community College, Western Central Maine Workforce Board, Djiboutian American Community Empowerment Project, Golden Opportunity and others.
- b) Utilize feedback from BEAR LA effort to inform education systems about emerging employment needs and collaborate to see that those needs are met.
- c) Work with state and federal partners to ensure barriers to training and employment are removed. Often Under existing labor laws, due to existing, people utilizing social benefit programs people are often unable to utilize paid work experience that allows them to gain that provide training, and direct work experiences with employers training for new

~~employment opportunities through direct experience with employers without experiencing a reduction in their current benefits, however, based on existing labor laws require compensation during these important training experiences require compensation~~ but the work experience training does not commit a job. The increased income a participant receives during this time often means a loss in benefits without a guarantee of employment. Barriers like this need to be identified and resolved to ensure people have the opportunity to access quality training that will yield higher wages.

Strategy 5: Community Development- Create a quality community people are attracted to.

When people have a choice in where they can choose to live or do business, they choose the best available options. Lewiston has made significant progress in community development with downtown revitalization, recreational opportunities, and low crime rates. However, the actions below focus on remaining challenges and opportunities the City can focus on to position Lewiston as a ~~City-city~~ people choose to be in.

- a) Create housing to attract residents and future workforce. Lewiston's housing stock is affordable however, ~~much of that inventory that is not~~ functionally obsolete or in need of significant investment. A majority of the housing stock was built before 1980 with only 8% of our residential units built since 2000. Technology has changed; how we utilize our homes have changed; and family size has changed. Investment in housing is needed to ensure our housing options are meeting the demand of the market and residents.
 - i. conduct a housing study to determine what is missing and market demand
 - ii. utilize developer round table to identify barriers and opportunities to build
- b) Support Lewiston Public Schools in community efforts to address school improvement & market their successes. While the school system has challenges like many other public school systems, they are doing many things right. People are attracted to great schools. Collaboration is needed to ensure the successes of our schools are known as well as support for the areas they are improving upon.
- c) Invest in public spaces. People are attracted to the outdoors and seeking welcoming, safe spaces to experience nature, even in the heart of the City. Investment in parks, sidewalks, trails, public art, and other outdoor features creates welcoming, desirable spaces people seek out. Nationally, real estate trends have found increased interest and value in properties in close proximity to quality trails and parks. People are choosing to live closer to these amenities and the demand is being seen in higher property values surrounding desirable outdoor public spaces.
- d) Provide biannual information to real estate agents on recent investment and successes in the City (education, arts and culture events, etc). Real estate agents are working directly with people interested in Lewiston. Ensuring they have up to date knowledge successes in the City creates excitement and interest in investing and living here.
- e) Community Safety Strategy. Lewiston remains one of the safest communities in Maine. However, we are not without challenges and perception of safety concerns require targeted initiatives to address those challenges.
 - i. Work with PD on communication and resident engagement
 - ii. Public infrastructure investments in downtown strategy
 - iii. Police Department participation in BEAR LA business visits

- iv. Continue strategic code enforcement work to ensure the health and safety of buildings.
- f) Digital Equity- ensure all businesses and residents can access and utilize broadband for workforce, education, and business. The community overall has great access to high speed internet however, some areas of the City continue to have poor options or barriers exist to utilize available resources. A plan to address these issues should be developed and implemented. The pandemic has demonstrated the critical need for accessing this utility and in order for the community and residents to advance in a post-Covid economy, significant effort should be focused on ensuring all in the community have access.
- g) Internal City Hall strategy. Business interactions with City staff are often; ensuring staff in all departments are resourced and informed for these interactions ensures a City government experience that is positive and creates an experience of no wrong doors.
 - i. Ensure all staff are informed about ED highlights to communicate to customers
 - ii. Customer service focus for businesses
 - iii. Streamline communication within ECDD to foster a more proactive and holistic approach to development efforts
- h) Support implementation of arts and culture LA plan. In keeping with the theme of continuing to build a desirable place to live and do business, arts and culture cannot be overlooked. The Lewiston Auburn area has a rich arts and culture sector. Significant work was done in 2014 exploring how to capitalize on this sector and strengthen it in our community. This plan should be revisited and continue to be implemented.

Economic and Community Development

Misty Parker

Economic Development Manager



To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Misty Parker
RE: Zoning Request 70 Blake Street
Date: August 5, 2020

Lewiston Housing approached the City about the possibility of rezoning the Ash Street portion of 70 Blake Street in order to develop underutilized land. Blake Street Towers is located on this property making the structure nonconforming with respect to density in the existing Downtown Residential (DR) zoning district. The lot is approximately 2.7 acres and the existing building contains 97 units. There is approximately 30,000 sf of vacant land on the Ash Street portion of the property that is suitable for development. The vacant land consists of green space and underutilized parking lots. Lewiston Housing is interested in building a three-story 40-unit apartment building within this area.

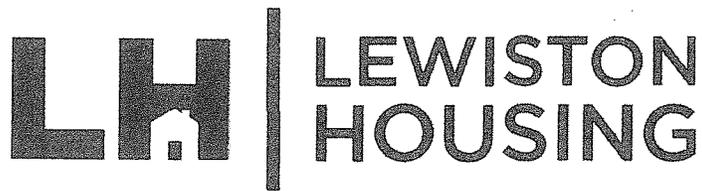
As the City looks to increase the supply of housing in the downtown area, development on this portion of the land would be consistent with the development patterns in the area and ideal for residential housing. Developing in this location would utilize existing infrastructure and create housing close to retail, restaurants, services and employment. Furthermore, the project would support eligibility to apply for the maximum Choice Neighborhood Implementation grant. With or without Choice, development of the site makes sense from a planning perspective.

Upon hearing of Lewiston Housing's interest in developing the site, ECD approached Planning and Code about the possibility of a Contract Zone. As they reviewed the idea they suggested doing a straight rezoning from Downtown DR to Centreville (CV), and expanding the area to the surrounding neighborhood in the rezoning. As Planning & Code identified, there are several blocks between 70 Blake Street and the existing CV boundary that contain multiple nonconforming parcels that would benefit from the change. The additional lots Planning and Code identified are adjacent to CV and as the downtown develops would be suitable for redevelopment consistent with CV more so than DR based on their existing location and present nonconforming attributes.

In the entire area proposed for rezoning, there are approximately 56 parcels. There are three factors for nonconformance affecting parcels in this proposed area: frontage, lot size, and density. For frontage, of the 56 parcels in the proposed area, 14 (25%) are nonconforming in frontage under current DR standards. If the proposed DR standard amendments currently being considered by Council are adopted those changes will

bring 6 lots into conformance with frontage, leaving 8 (14%) still nonconforming in this area. If the change to CV happens only 1 (1%) will remain in nonconformance. For total lot size in this area, 34 (61%) parcels are nonconforming under current DR standards. With the proposed DR standards this drops to 16 (29%) and 0 under CV standards. And for density, 22 (50%) parcels are currently nonconforming and this will remain the same under the proposed DR standard amendments. If this area is rezoned to CV, zero (0) parcels will be nonconforming. Enclosed in your packet is a map of the area and existing nonconforming parcels. Rezoning would make most properties conforming, and would also increase the attractiveness of that area for redevelopment.

ECD and Planning and Code are in agreement a larger rezoning of the area makes sense for the longer term vision of the downtown and community. It is in keeping with other rezoning and planning work underway, including the Comprehensive Plan, Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan, and Design Guidelines. We recommend the larger area be rezoned for all of the issues noted above. However, if the council is not supportive of the larger rezoning, LHA will pursue a contract zone request for their parcel. If supportive of the larger rezone, we ask that the Council to initiate the zoning map amendment process and for staff to prepare an amendment for the Planning Board to provide a recommendation and bring it back to the Council for action.



August 5, 2020

Lincoln Jeffers
City of Lewiston
27 Pine Street
Lewiston, ME 04240

RE: Blake Street Tower Campus

Dear Linc:

I am writing to seek guidance from the City on the exciting opportunity presented by LHA's Blake Street Tower campus. At present, the 2.27-acre site is home to Blake Street Towers which provides 97 studio and 1BR public housing units for senior and disabled residents of Lewiston.

During my tenure at Lewiston Housing Authority, I have been struck by the underutilization of the parking lots that dominate the rear portion of the site along Ash Street. Very few residents at Blake Street Towers have cars and those that do park in the lots closest to the building's entrance. As a result, the parking lots along Ash Street are typically empty.

We believe that the approximately 300' x 100' portion of the site bound by Ash Street, Blake Street Tower and the buildings at 90 Ash and 110 Ash would be an excellent location for in-fill development. At present, the empty parking lots disrupt the street scape of Ash Street. We believe that the site can successfully support development that is compatible with the massing of the neighboring buildings on Ash Street. Additionally, the remaining +/- 70,000 sf of the Blake Street Tower has plenty of parking to serve its residents as well as significant amounts of green space that can be improved for resident use.

The site is currently zoned DR and Blake Street Tower is a grandfathered non-conforming use within the zone. As a result, there is no opportunity to subdivide the site without a change to zoning. The purpose of this letter is to seek City guidance on the approach you would like us to follow in initiating a civic conversation regarding this opportunity.

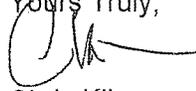
As you know, we are also in the process of developing the Housing portion of the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant application. We will be able to maximize the proceeds of that grant if we are able to develop 40 mixed-income apartments on this site. We have asked our architect to develop conceptual floor plates and massing for a 40-unit development (attached). These concepts are meant only to show how 40 units could sit on the site compatibly with the adjacent buildings on Ash Street and are not intended to be a proposal for development.

We are also pursuing other exciting activities on the campus. We are in the process of seeking financing for a recapitalization of Blake Street Tower using HUD's RAD program and MaineHousing's tax exempt bond and 4% LIHTC programs. We are also working with the Promise Early Education Center to double their capacity by relocating their program to the building at 1 College Street that currently houses our offices.

These activities, when coupled with infill development at the rear portion of the Blake Street Tower site, creates the opportunity for a thoughtful master plan for the vicinity. We look forward to collaborating with the City and the community on this process and await your guidance on how to proceed.

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

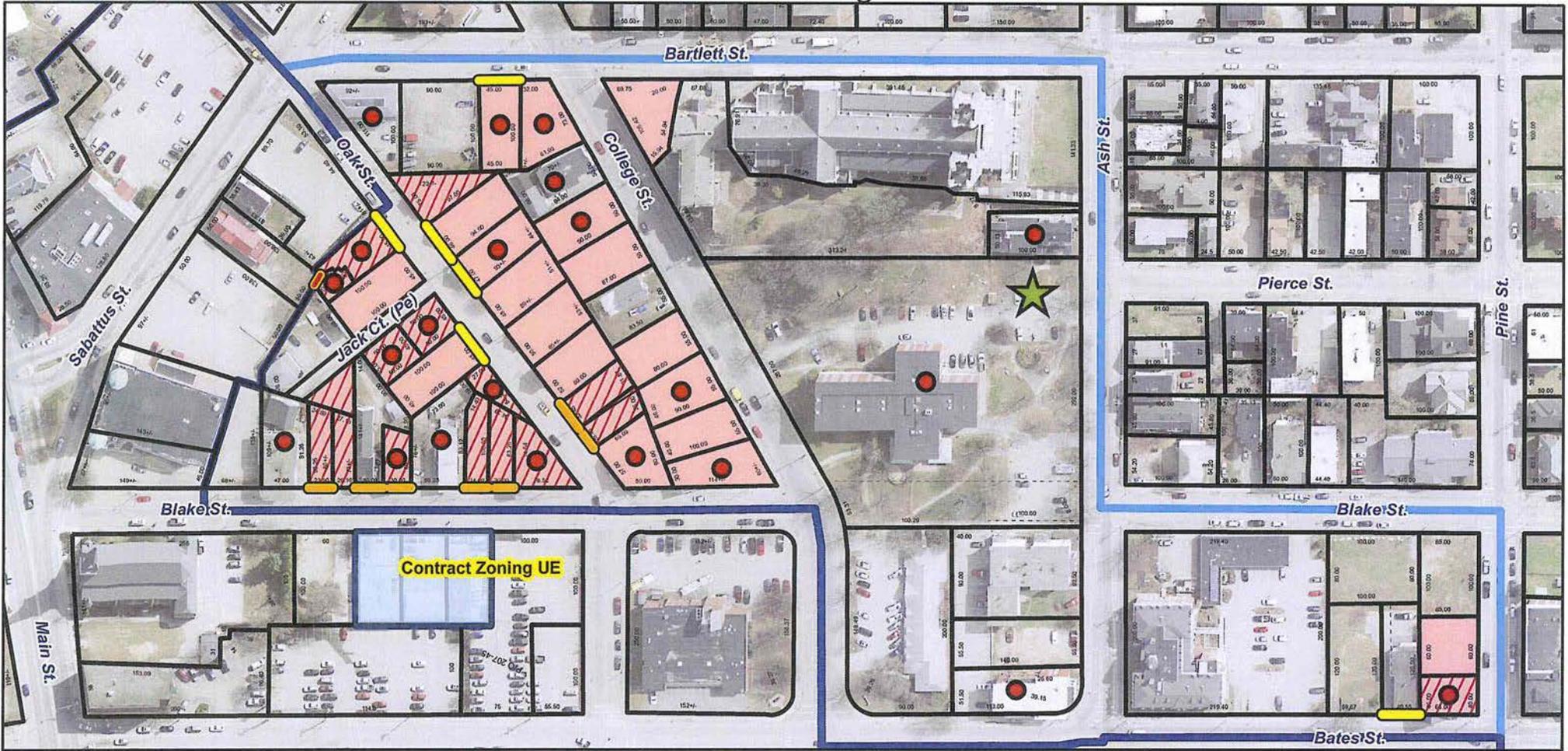
Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CK', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Kilmurry
Executive Director

Cc: David Hediger, Douglas Greene, Misty Parker, James Buzzell

Blake Street Rezoning Discussion



Nonconforming Parcels

	Current DR standards	%	Proposed DR standards	%	CV standards	%
Lot size	34	61%	16	29%	0	-
Lot density	22	50%	22	50%	0	-
Frontage	14	25%	8	14%	1	1%

Note: Density calculations are meant to provide context as to the current land use pattern in the neighborhood. Density is not necessarily a concern with respect to the continuation or reconstruction of the nonconforming use for 1, 2, or 3 unit dwellings, per Article VI of Appendix A: Zoning and Land Use Code of the City of Lewiston Code of Ordinances.

Total lots: 56 | Approx. 44 in residential use. Lot density calculations are based on total residential lots.

- Current CV Zoning Line
- Proposed CV Zoning Line
- Nonconforming lot size under current DR standards
- Nonconforming lot size under proposed DR standards
- Nonconforming density under current and proposed DR standards
- Nonconforming frontage under current DR standards
- Nonconforming frontage under proposed DR standards
- Nonconforming frontage under CV standards