

Planning commission

Study Session

Members present: Jim Beneke, Matt Eckholm, Sylvie Hyman, Tess Machalek, Sarah Strain, Tom Weber

Members absent: Mia Divecha, John Flanagan

Staff present: Laura Chamberlain

Item 1: Arrive + Thrive implementation tracker

Arrive + Thrive is a two-year small area planning initiative focused on three light rail station areas and the Excelsior Boulevard corridor west of Highway 100. Ms. Chamberlain presented the Arrive + Thrive Implementation Tracker, an interactive web-based tool intended to serve as an interactive way for the public to view the information rather than only through static PDF documents. The tracker also allows staff to update in the future and link to implementation actions. Currently, only the Beltline Gateway is populated with content. The commission is serving in a beta-testing capacity before the tool is expanded to other gateways.

The interface features an interactive map with a slider toggling between the illustrative plan rendering and an aerial base map, alongside panels listing outcomes and associated implementation actions for each gateway. Each implementation action includes details such as timeline category, action type, complexity, benefit score, community partners, action tracker for staff to update progress and an area to link related projects.

- Commissioners offered the following feedback during the discussion. Commissioner Weber suggested there be clear labeling slider comparison tool with one side as the current aerial photograph with a date and the other as the illustrative future vision, drawing a parallel to how the swipe tool is commonly used to show before-and-after imagery following natural disasters.
- Commissioner Machalek raised a question about how the benefit score was determined. It is displayed as a one-to-three dot scale on each implementation action, but having some explanatory information would be helpful.
- Commissioner Beneke also noted difficulty being geographically oriented within the map and recommended the addition of landmark labels such as the post office or Bass Lake. Another commission added that it would be helpful add in the outcomes description say something like, “this space currently houses buildings, Pavik Museum, post office”. Similarly, Commissioner Hyman asked about the meaning of the orange and red lines on the illustrative plan. Ms. Chamberlain confirmed that a map legend would be added and suggested a street map view option.
- Commissioner Weber raised a concern about the visual boundaries between outcomes, noting uncertainty about where one outcome zone ended and another began or do they overlap? Ms. Chamberlain acknowledged that in some areas, outcomes are intentionally overlapping and we are looking for a clearer way to convey this in the tracker. It was also suggested that the descriptive language for outcomes be written in more direct,

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user-friendly terms (for example, “three new connector roads are envisioned” when describing the road network outcome.

- Additional feedback included making the light rail station icon larger and interactive saying “future light rail station”; a “home” or reset button be made more prominent for navigation.
- Ms. Chamberlain confirmed the tracker will be viewable on different devices, including phones.
- Ms. Chamberlain also relayed feedback received from Commissioner Flanagan, who recommended that the action tracker portion be highlighted more and stationary at the top. He also recommended including an introductory walkthrough or tutorial for first-time users.

2. Summary of zoning code Items Identified by planning commissions

Commissioner Hyman raised an item from a prior meeting regarding a proposed zoning code amendment that would allow businesses to convert required car parking spaces into bicycle parking without incurring a penalty against their minimum parking count. Commissioner Hyman indicated that the precise ratio was less important to her than enabling the option, suggesting that even a one-to-one conversion (one car space replaced by one compliant bicycle rack) would expand opportunities for added bike parking. Commissioners noted that this proposal does not mandate action but simply opens the option to businesses, which the group agreed was a meaningful distinction. Ms. Chamberlain committed to drafting language, noting it would not be included in the version of the zoning code update currently published online but could be incorporated thereafter.

Commissioner Hyman also suggested that a complementary effort (outside the scope of the Planning Commission) could involve the city council exploring grant funding or incentive programs to offset the cost of rack installation for businesses, removing a further barrier. For the summary document, she recommended that language describing parking's relationship to congestion be revised from “can cause” to “causes,” to reflect a more definitive statement.

Future scheduled meeting/event dates:

May 20, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting

June 3, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting

June 17, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting

July 1, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting

3. Adjournment – 5:40 p.m.

Signed by:



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Laura Chamberlain, liaison

Signed by:



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John Flanagan, chair member

These minutes were created with the assistance of a generative AI transcript service, then edited and finalized by a city staff person.