


∞ AGENDA ∞

MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, December 02, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
Commission Chambers at City Hall – 300 W. Baraga Ave.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

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- The seal of Marquette, Michigan, is circular. It features a central illustration of a ship on a body of water, with a lighthouse on the shore and a tree. The text "MARQUETTE" is at the top and "MICHIGAN" is at the bottom. Below the ship, it says "FOUNDED 1848".
- 1) ROLL CALL
 - 2) APPROVE AGENDA
 - 3) APPROVE MINUTES: **Minutes of 11-11-25**
 - 4) CONFLICT of INTEREST
 1. PUBLIC HEARINGS
 2. CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON AGENDA ITEMS
 3. OLD BUSINESS
 4. NEW BUSINESS
 5. CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS
 6. CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS, MINUTES OF OTHER BOARDS/COMMITTEES
 - A. Marquette County Intent to Plan notification**
 7. TRAINING
 - A. Traffic Engineers and Planners Need to Do Better article, Michigan Planner magazine (Michigan Chapter, American Planning Assoc.), July/August 2025**
 8. WORK SESSION ON REPORTS/PLANS/ORDINANCES
 - A. Preparation for 12/08 City Commission-Planning Commission joint work session**
 - B. Land Development Code amendments**
 9. COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS
 10. ADJOURNMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT

A member of the audience speaking during the public comment portion of the agenda shall limit his/her remarks to 3 minutes. Time does not need to be reserved for an item of business listed on the agenda, or otherwise addressed under Item #2, as time is provided for public comment for each item of business.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The order of presentation for a public hearing shall be as follows:

- a. City Staff/Consultants
- b. Applicant
- c. Correspondence
- d. Public Testimony
- e. Commission Discussion (Commissioners must state any Ex-Parte contact or Conflicts of Interest prior to engaging in any discussions), if it occurred, prior to entering into discussion or voting on a case).

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
October 07, 2025

A regular meeting of the Marquette City Planning Commission was duly called and held at 6:00p.m. on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, in the Commission Chambers at City Hall. This meeting is also available to view online [here](#) at the City's website.

ROLL CALL

Planning Commission (PC) members present (5): M. Rayner, J. Fitkin, J. Guter, Chair Kevin Clegg, N. Vermaat.

PC Members absent (4): K. Hunter, D. Fetter, S. Lawry, Vice-Chair A. Wilkinson.

Staff present: City Planner and Zoning Administrator D. Stensaas, Zoning Official A. Landers.

AGENDA

It was moved by M. Rayner, seconded by J. Fitkin, and carried 5-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

MINUTES

It was moved by J. Fitkin, seconded by M. Rayner, and carried 3-0, with two (2) abstentions, to approve the minutes of the October 07, 2025 meeting, with changes stated by K. Clegg to a portion of the minutes that were reported as "inaudible".

CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON AGENDA ITEMS

Nobody wished to comment.

NEW BUSINESS

A. 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Dates

A. Landers said that she drafted a memo showing meeting dates for calendar year 2026 and said that the Planning Commission should make a motion on approving the dates if they find them acceptable.

It was moved by J. Guter, seconded by N. Vermaat, and carried 5-0 to approve the proposed meeting dates for 2026.

B. Site Plan Review Update

A. Landers explained that the chart provided shows the site plans that have been approved during this calendar year, and which were approved by staff and those that needed Planning Commission (PC) approval. She also said that the site plan tally for 2024 is included at the bottom for comparison. She asked if anyone had questions. There were some questions and a bit of discussion followed. The meeting video referenced in the link at the top of the page provides full audio content of the meeting.

D. Stensaas said that the reason staff is providing this periodic review is that a couple of years ago the City adopted new standards for site plan review that increased the threshold for the PC to need to review plans and placed more of the responsibility on staff, so this type of periodic review helps get the Planning Commission up to speed on what plans have been reviewed by staff, and it provides transparency by putting this information out in the public record. He also said that in 2024, about seventy-five percent of site plans were reviewed by staff and only a quarter by the PC.

N. Vermaat asked if the requirement for acting on a site plan is to begin construction within one year?

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A. Landers said yes, they just have to start implementing the project within a year. D. Stensaas said that just putting a shovel in the ground is adequate and related how that act was used to document the beginning of one project in the city recently.

J. Guter asked if staff has to approve the site plans if the proposal meets zoning requirements.

D. Stensaas said yes, and that was the reason for the shift towards staff approval for most site plans. He also said that all site plans that don't involve some discretion by the PC are going to be approved if they meet all the standards, and unless there is some potential large community impact, it doesn't make sense to waste the developer's time, the Planning Commission's time, or the staff's time in preparing staff reports. He said this was a recommendation of the Michigan Planning Association a few years ago, and we were quick to act on it, especially given that times are hard for development, with financing being very costly and the conditions for creating moderately affordable housing extremely difficult to achieve.

A. Landers said that site plan review is an administrative function, where the point is to determine if it meets codes. She also said that we're lucky here in the City to have different departments with all the necessary staffing to review site plans, whereas in some townships, you may only have one staff person and no separate engineering, fire, or public works departments to conduct their own reviews.

D. Stensaas also said that we do regular updates of the Land Development Code, so if we know that we like the standards that are adopted, we should be comfortable with staff performing most plan reviews.

CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Nobody wished to comment.

TRAINING

A. MAP Develops Transportation Land Use Guiding Principles article, Michigan Planner magazine (Michigan Assoc. of Planning), July-Aug. 2025.

D. Stensaas remarked that this article points out the fact that land use and transportation are intertwined and that it's timely due to the two big transportation planning projects that the City is involved with now, which are the micromobility plan that is due to be released next month and the traffic study for the corridors and intersections around the "College Heights"/former hospital site and the new dorms being built on Presque Isle Avenue. The Planning Commission and staff briefly the article and the traffic study.

J. Guter asked if there would be a presentation on the traffic study that was done. D. Stensaas said that he wasn't sure, but would try to find out and report back to the PC.

K. Clegg said that he appreciated the article and liked that it mentioned fostering economic growth and social equity, and that from his experience with bike commuting year-round for a decade, there are significant financial savings that can be realized, and that alternative modes of transportation can make cities more affordable, and so that it is something we should be working towards.

WORK SESSION ON REPORTS/PLANS/ORDINANCES

A. COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN REVIEW

D. Stensaas said that the checklist from MSU-Extension (MSUE) has been used in the past to develop and review our Master Plans, and said he used the most recently updated version to review the current Plan.

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He stated that this effort is required because the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) requires us to renew our certification. He explained that there were numerous requirements for initial certification from this program, and some of those things – like our Guide to Development – had to be updated, and that is good because it needed to be updated. He navigated to the Community Development Department page online and showed the links on the Planning page to the Community Master Plan (CMP), and said that the Guide to Development is found on the Zoning page.

He said that he used the MSUE checklist when he was developing the 2015 CMP, and that by his recollection, that Plan met all of the required items in the list, and that the current one doesn't. He said that is a bit of a problem, but he pointed out that on top of the third page of the checklist it states that "the Planning Enabling Act allows communities great latitude to determine the contents of a Master Plan" and then it goes into how a lot of plans are constructed. He explained that we have an executive summary and a "factbook" with all of the background information, that the "Vision for Marquette" guidebook or summary is about 50 pages, and the factbook is ten chapters and some appendices, which is where all the data and most of the information about the city is compiled. He said that the Land Use Plan and the chart called the Zoning Plan, which is only three pages, are in the executive summary.

He explained how the checklist is laid out, identifying items that are to be included under the Planning Enabling Act and those that are not required. He put his annotated list, which he said he sent to the members by email with the agenda, up on the monitors for the discussion. He said that the only things not included in the Community Master Plan [but should be] are the Zoning Map, and that some aspects of the Zoning Plan are deficient. He said he went through the checklist, annotated where those items are in the plan, and that we don't need to discuss any of that unless the members wish to. He also provided background information to show how people from neighboring jurisdictions were involved, noting that some of the ways the checklist items are satisfied are not obvious from the Plan's content.

J. Guter asked if there are some other things there that we should supplement our Master Plan with?

D. Stensaas said that in his notes for what the CMP is missing, there is a description of the zoning districts, because the current plan doesn't speak to those or any proposed zoning districts. He explained that when the last Community Master Plan was being created, there was a lot of discussion about the deficiencies of existing zoning districts, the advantages of making changes by adding new districts and eliminating others, and a lot of that was stated in the Plan. He said that Master Plan, adopted in 2015, described existing zoning districts and made recommendations for new zoning districts, and that most of those changes were adopted with the rest of the Land Development Code (LDC) in 2019.

M. Rayner asked if the zoning map is also missing. D. Stensaas said yes, that is the other big thing that's missing, according to the checklist.

K. Clegg asked about the amendment process for the Master Plan.

D. Stensaas said that it will involve notification as for a new plan, and a lot of the same process, but we wouldn't be doing workshops and that kind of outreach if the amendment is in the next year or so. He also said that the zoning map and descriptions of zoning districts is in the Land Development Code, and that Code is more or less based on the zoning plan from the previous Community Master Plan, and the current Master Plan hasn't been around long enough to affect what we've done with reconfiguring any of our zoning districts.

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M. Rayner asked if an amendment can be added without going through the whole process.

D. Stensaas said that even adding an appendix requires us to notify people that we're amending the CMP, but that's not really a big deal, and that's why just doing the minimum required outreach to our adjacent units of government alone wouldn't be adequate public outreach for doing a major amendment to the CMP. But the things we're talking about are pretty uncontroversial, unless we're going to make recommendations for changing zoning districts.

J. Guter asked if there was a discussion of that during the planning process.

D. Stensaas said that there was internal discussion of that with our consultants, and they were hired to lead the process with input from our steering committee and staff. He said that the Future Land Use Plan is vastly different in that it is vague on a parcel-level basis. He added that previous to the current CMP, there was a parcel-specific Future Land Use Plan. He said that may have been too rigid, and that the existing Future Land Use Plan has created typologies for neighborhoods or locations/districts within the city, where those land-use recommendations apply. He also said he believes the future land use plan can be interpreted in different ways, referencing the extent of what the recommendations apply to in particular, and related that the rezoning that went to the City Commission recently - which the PC recommended and the City Commission denied - is an example of that. He also said he thinks our staff assumed our consultants would deliver a plan that met all legal requirements, and that we weren't reviewing it by a checklist like this, but the description of zoning districts and a zoning map should have been included. He said that those are oversights, but that he doesn't consider it a huge problem because our LDC contains the missing items from the CMP, but he thinks that there will need to be an amendment to the Plan to get those things into compliance with the Act.

J. Guter asked if there were any other big-ticket things that would also need to be addressed.

D. Stensaas said no, those were the only things that he found missing. He scrolled through his annotated checklist and said that he left off his review at the point where the "Best Planning Practice Content" list begins. He explained that the CMP doesn't comprehensively address "asset management" and that should possibly be included in the next amendment which provides for new, optional content. He said he is referring specifically to the asset management program developed by the Michigan Infrastructure Council, which is taught to municipal and township officials to help communities better manage their assets within a framework plan, rather than in a reactive mode for large asset replacement and unplanned maintenance costs. He related that the City has not yet begun comprehensive asset management, which would involve each department conducting a readiness assessment, developing service delivery and other goals for its assets, and then developing long-term maintenance and replacement plans for all of the City's assets.

K. Clegg asked what the timeline is for getting the Plan reapproved, notifying people and getting the word out, how long are we looking at?

D. Stensaas said that if it's just an amendment for the required items we discussed, that's pretty simple and is a process that only takes a few months, but related that he didn't know if we'll do that or if we're going to take on something more substantial before we do an amendment. He said that the minutes of this meeting will be transmitted to the RRC staff for their feedback.

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He also said that staff has a fairly robust list of items to update in the Land Development Code, and he said that one thing we talked a bit about last year that we didn't do was to recommend and initiate the possible rezoning of some properties, because there are some rezonings that are justified. He said he wants to discuss with Dennis whether we might embark on that, and that it might come to bring up at the joint work session scheduled between the Planning Commission and City Commission on December 8th. He said that we could discuss that at your next meeting. He also said that he didn't have anything else to discuss on the CMP checklist.

K. Clegg asked if there were any more questions, then said that we'll look forward to moving forward on this.

B. LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENTS

D. Stensaas said that we're starting with simple, easy items.

A. Landers explained that the amendments provided are things we found that need to be fixed, mainly language issues.

The Staff and Planning Commission discussed the provided items and agreed to the proposed changes for each issue, in addition to deciding that the word "existing" should be removed from section 54.639(A) of the LDC, leaving only "required" parking subject to the provisions of that section of Article 6.

It was moved by M. Rayner, seconded by J. Guter, and carried 5-0 to add the items discussed to the final document of proposed LDC amendments.

COMMISSION and STAFF COMMENTS

M. Rayner thanked the two new members for joining the commission.

J. Guter said that he wants to reiterate that he is happy to be here and is looking forward to being a productive member of this commission.

N. Vermaat said that he is excited to learn from the other members and to be here.

J. Fitkin welcomed the new members to the board.

D. Stensaas said that the next scheduled meeting, for 11/18, would be cancelled since no business needs to be conducted. He also said to please follow up on the invitation to the work session.

A. Landers said that she was told an item would be delivered this week that will require a meeting on 12/16. She also thanked the two new members for volunteering.

K. Clegg thanked the two new members for joining the commission.

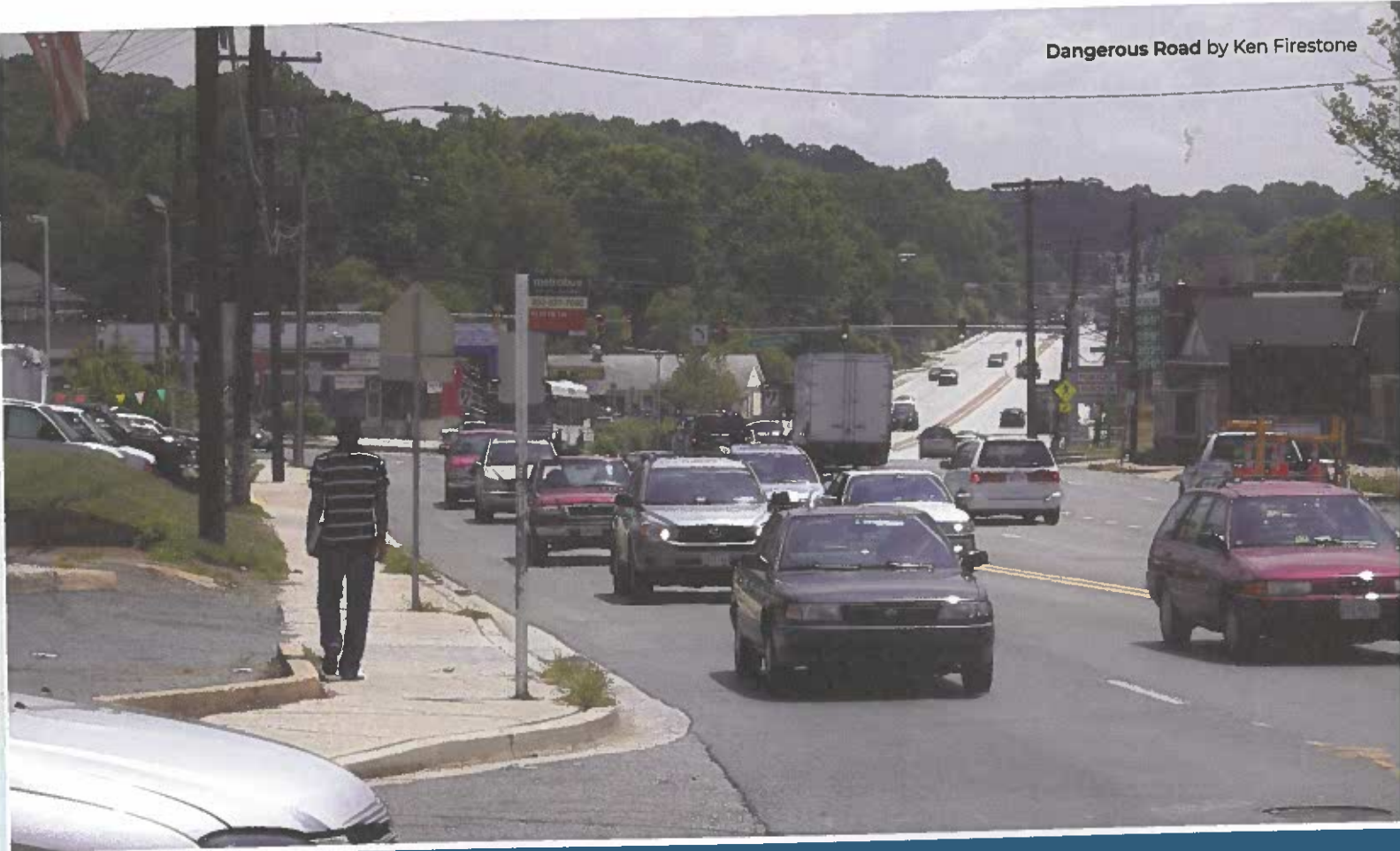
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ADJOURNMENT

Chair K. Clegg adjourned the meeting at 7:20 pm

Prepared by D. Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission Staff Liaison

Dangerous Road by Ken Firestone



Traffic Engineers and Planners Need to Do Better

Professions need to improve over time. Physicians, for instance, have been around for at least 5,000 years. In those early days, and for a long time since, physicians probably killed more people than they saved. But as an empirical science, they learned and got better. And better. And better. It's still not perfect, but physicians have come a long way. Life expectancy was around 30 years for most of human history, and now it's over 70 years in most of the world today.

Traffic engineering? Well, my discipline is only about 100 years old. While it may be a while before we can admit this, we still might be killing more people than we save.

Do traffic engineers work to improve road safety? Of course we do, but these

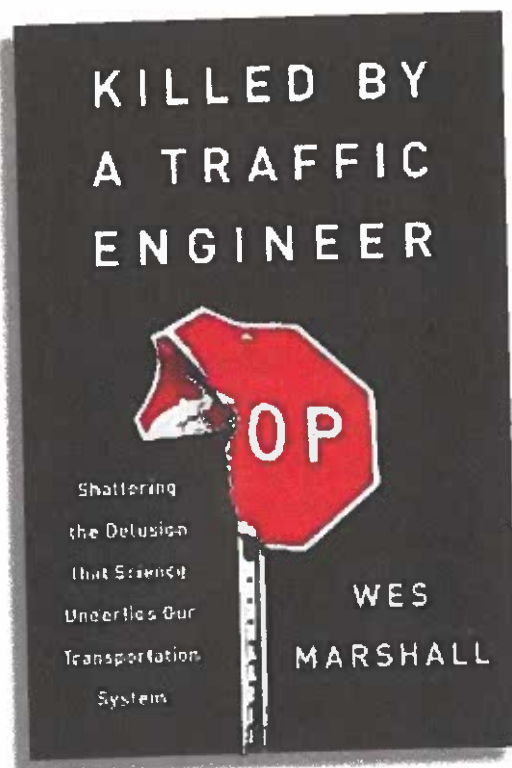
efforts tend to be reactive instead of proactive. In other words, our protocols are set up so that we wait for someone to get hurt or die in our transportation system before we step in and try to improve safety. In fact, we need to see more than one person get hurt or die. To be more specific, we usually need to see more than two people get hurt or die in a single location, ideally within a two- or three-year window, for their sacrifice to trigger what's called a MUTCD warrant.

The Manuals

A "warrant" refers to the numeric thresholds that the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) uses to justify – or "warrant" – the installation of

traffic control devices. The MUTCD tells us what our traffic signs, signals, and markings need to look like. Less logically, the MUTCD also sets thresholds telling us how many pedestrians must risk their lives before a traffic control device such as crosswalk, pedestrian hybrid beacon, or HAWK (high-intensity activated crosswalk beacon) signal would be "warranted".

One Pedestrian Volume warrant says that we need at least 93 pedestrians crossing a major street in the peak hour before a traffic control device would be considered justified. Where that 93 number comes from isn't clear because the MUTCD doesn't cite any research. Even if we do install a signal, the MUTCD tells us that we are welcome to put it in flashing



mode during all the hours of the day when there are fewer than 93 pedestrians per hour. This means that up to and including 92 people per hour would be on their own when it comes to crossing that major street.

The MUTCD is one of a half dozen thousand-page manuals used by traffic engineers. The truth is that they represent guidelines more than standards. This even goes for the MUTCD, which seems the most "standard-y" of all these manuals. The MUTCD itself says we can override any warrant through "engineering judgment" and that "documentation of engineering judgment is not required" to do so. Nevertheless, it is easier to blame the road users involved and the warrant for not letting us fix the more systemic problems than to exercise engineering judgment that deviates from our manuals.

The Culture

Unfortunately, the culture of traffic engineering and the fear of liability reinforces that caution. Too many practitioners keep their heads down, cling to these books as standards despite the lack of science that might have gone into their creation,

and shy away from empirical data that challenges the long-held beliefs we find in our manuals. When we ask the wrong questions and focus on solving the wrong problems, when we prioritize logical theories over empirical results, when we discount the counterintuitive nature of transportation outcomes, when we overbuild roadways and blame road users for behaving exactly as that roadway suggests, when our resulting crash data misleads us into putting our safety eggs in the Education and Enforcement baskets, and when we ignore the role that Engineering played in people not following the so-called rules-of-the-road, we put ourselves in a position where we don't even realize that business-as-usual might be the problem.

How the Manuals & Culture Work Together

Put traffic engineering manuals and traffic engineering culture together and you get a feedback loop that encourages us to wait for people to get hurt or die while also discouraging us from stepping outside the manuals. The result is a system where prevention is rarely on the agenda.

Here's the crazy part: we don't have to keep doing it this way. We aren't condemned to wait for dead bodies to show up in the street before acting. An ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure. Sadly, we seem to think this proverb doesn't apply to us.

How to Do Better

But being more proactive could start with recognizing that many of our road safety-related "symptoms" originate outside of traffic engineering. For example, land use and zoning choices spread destinations and force long, unavoidable car trips. That exposure drives people toward bigger, more dangerous vehicles and inflates crash risk.

I experienced this firsthand. When I lived in suburban Connecticut, I couldn't

leave my house without a car, and the nearest grocery store was six miles away. Each way. I now live in Denver in a neighborhood that has six grocery stores within a mile of my house. The difference isn't luck; it's design.

This difference is also one of the more underappreciated aspects of road safety. Traffic engineers call it exposure and treat it as a given. But all this driving isn't a given. It's a symptom of our land use and zoning. And road safety problems? They are a symptom of all this driving.

If planners build communities that help limit exposure – compact, mixed-use communities where short trips are common and walking/biking are viable options – engineers can focus on fine-tuning streets rather than compensating for systemic over-exposure.

Meanwhile, we traffic engineers must embrace the discretion that our manuals already grant us. If a community thinks that a street or intersection needs a safety intervention, we don't need to wait for some of them to sacrifice themselves to prove it's really a problem. We can instead apply current evidence to prevent such problems from happening in the first place.

Traffic engineers can do better. Planners can do better. And together, we can make safety proactive instead of continuing to play this lethal game of Whac-A-Mole.

Wes Marshall is a professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Colorado Denver, where he holds a joint appointment in urban planning. He serves as director of the CU Denver Human-Centered Transportation program and the Transportation Research Center at CU Denver. He is a licensed Professional Engineer and focuses on transportation teaching and research dedicated to creating safer and more sustainable transportation systems. He is the author of *Killed by a Traffic Engineer: Shattering the Delusion that Science Underlies our Transportation System* and was a keynote presenter at MAP's Transportation Bonanza conference in February 2025.



CITY OF MARQUETTE
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dave Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator
DATE: November 25, 2025
SUBJECT: **Work Session – Preparation for 12/08/25 joint work session with City Commission**

The Planning Commission will develop its talking points for the joint work session.



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Dave Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator
DATE: November 25, 2025
SUBJECT: Work Session – Land Development Code Amendments for 2026

Staff and the Planning Commission will continue the recent work on potential amendments to the Land Development Code. This effort will continue for the next few months until all known issues have been resolved. Materials for the work session will be provided at the meeting and emailed to members beforehand.