



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Bruce K. Walden, Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Elizabeth H. Tyler, Community Development Director

DATE: October 13, 2005

SUBJECT: Philo Road Action Plan Status Report – February to September 2005

This update covers the City's progress in completing the goals and objectives of the Philo Road Action Plan, covering the period of time since Plan adoption in February through September 30, 2005. It is laid out in such a manner as to address what has been done in the area to meet those goals and objectives. Much progress has been made, but there is still much left to do. Hopefully the City, businesses, and residents can continue to make progress in improving the business district.

Goal:

Improving the Image

- Kmart Site – An agreement for the redevelopment of the 8.7 acre site by developer Chris Creek was approved by Council. The project will contain approximately 400 units of student apartments as well as a minimum of 30,000 square feet of retail space. City is currently working with the developer on more finalized site and architectural plans.
- Jewel Building was purchased and is fully tenanted with self-storage use as well as a new 200 job call center. New owner is actively recruiting retail/restaurant businesses for outlot development.
- Marathon – Plans for new gas station/convenience store have been approved and construction should soon commence.
- Sunny China Buffet, at the site of the former Hunan Chinese restaurant, opened for business on September 6.
- The City held a Southeast Urbana Neighborhood Business Meeting at St. Matthews Lutheran Church on August 31. The City is following up on issues and concerns raised and answered many questions regarding development and ways the City is helping to improve the area.
- Urbana Police have provided additional surveillance and presence in the area in order to curb crime and increase sense of security.
- The City created new entranceway and directional signs to identify and direct people to the business district

Retain and Enhance Existing Businesses

- Processed and approved a loan interest subsidy for True Value for an extensive remodel
- County Market – County Market has commenced remodeling and plans to begin improvements to their parking lot in coming weeks

Retention Visits

- 93% of all potential businesses in the district were interviewed (5 declined, 3 remain to be scheduled)

Improve Development Incentives

- The Enterprise Zone extension for South Philo was approved in September. This will provide further incentive for development and redevelopment to occur in the area in the form of possible property tax benefits and sales tax exemptions on building materials.

Plan and Construct Infrastructure Improvements

- Colorado Avenue was connected to Stone Creek Boulevard.
- Paul Tatman platted and has begun construction on Prairie Winds, a new subdivision that will contain a mix of single-family, zero-lot line units, and senior housing.
- As part of the agreement for the Kmart site redevelopment, Florida Avenue will begin to be extended to High Cross Road within the next two years. Once the extension is complete, access and traffic to the Philo Road Business District will greatly improve, also improving desirability of the area for potential new businesses.

Beautify the Business District

- City staff has met with various businesses and nearby apartment owners to encourage property cleanup.
- Decorative planting beds were added along Philo Road between Florida and Colorado.
- Decorative banners were put up on tall light poles on Philo Road between Florida and Colorado Avenues.
- Local citizens and staff members participated in an area cleanup organized by ward councilmember Barnes.

Provide Marketing Assistance

- The City provides marketing assistance for vacant properties, new developments, and outlots via the City website as well as through marketing packets that are given to potential tenants or developers upon request.
- The City has created and distributed a directory of businesses located in the Philo Road business district, and will update periodically or as necessary.
- New Build Urbana Tax Rebate Program pamphlets were created and promote continued housing expansion of main market – Southeast Urbana
- The City refers any development or tenant leads to realtors or owners representing buildings or sites that potentially fit their needs.

Encourage Creative Building Reuse

- The former Kinder Care building at Colorado and Philo Road was purchased and will be occupied by a local engineering firm.

Promote Development of Outlots

- The City has assisted with marketing of outlots, and is willing to assist with conceptual site layout and will coordinate with lot owners or developers concerning access, utilities, drainage, platting, site planning, inspections, and permitting.
- Developments on outlots are eligible for loan/grant subsidies through the Philo Road Redevelopment Incentive Program.

Enforcement

- The City has stepped up enforcement of code regulations in the area, especially nuisance violations.
- Police and other City Staff have met with business and nearby apartment owners to discuss compliance with ordinances and to encourage cleanup and proper maintenance.