



MINUTES
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Tuesday, February 25, 2003, City Council Chambers

Call to Order: Chairperson Cobb called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Roll Call: Connie Eldridge called the roll. A quorum was present.

Commission Members Present: Fred Cobb, Robert Lewis, Joanna Shisler, Anne Heinze Silvis, Umesh Thakkar

Commission Members Absent: Chris Diana, Alice Englebretsen, Dennis Vidoni

Others Present: Bob Grewe, Connie Eldridge, Melissa Headley, Mike Loschen, Karen Rasmussen, and Elizabeth Tyler, Community Development Services; Ruth Wyman, Urbana City Council.

Approval of Minutes: *Chairperson Cobb asked for approval or corrections to the January 28, 2003 minutes. Ms. Eldridge noted that Ella Coleman was not present at this meeting. Commissioner Lewis moved to approve the minutes with the appropriate correction, and Commissioner Silvis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Staff Report: Mr. Grewe distributed an outline and highlighted the new items. Ms. Rasmussen reported that Congress has mandated federal departments to form collaborations, so the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is joining with the Veterans' Administration (VA) and Health and Human Services to produce a Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) for a collaborative initiative targeting chronically homeless veterans. Veterans must (1) have a disability and (2) be homeless for one year or more or have four or more episodes of homelessness in the last three years. The City of Urbana will apply for an additional Shelter Plus Care Program. This will fund rental assistance for current renovation of five bedrooms of Prairie Center's Hill Street property. It will also fund the conversion of eight one-bedroom units to permanent housing of Provena Behavioral Health at Mental Health Center's Elm Street property and a four-bedroom group home at South Cottage Grove Avenue. The City of Urbana will link supportive services to Frances Nelson Health Center and the VA in Danville. Treatment and supportive services for persons recovering from substance abuse- and/or mental health-related issues will be provided by Prairie Center and Provena Behavioral Health.

Ms. Rasmussen stated the City of Urbana currently administers two Shelter Plus Care programs that total 38 units of permanent housing. This is a rental assistance program for persons with disabilities: HIV/AIDS, chronic mental health issues, substance abuse-related issues, and developmental disabilities. The supportive services are a dollar-for-dollar match by four sponsoring agencies: Prairie Center, Provena Behavioral Health, GCAP, and Developmental Services Center. Shelter Plus Care I was recently renewed and will begin its seventh year on July 1, 2003. Shelter Plus Care II has two years left of the current grant. Staff will also reapply for this renewal.

Mr. Grewe said the FY 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan would include goals, strategies and objectives for five years. This will involve analyzing housing issues and data collection to understand community needs. The plan is an opportunity to look at what was done and to consider new initiatives.

Staff identified the need to secure seven feet of right of way from the property at 902 Wascher before donation to Homestead Corporation. Ms. Tyler noted this was a Public Works and zoning issue. Homestead Corporation was able to redesign the house to accommodate a reasonable setback plus a right-of-way acquisition. Since the City still owned the lot, it was important to provide for a planned right-of-way. City Council approved donation of the balance of the properties to Homestead Corporation.

City Council passed the bond cap without dollar allocation to stay eligible for the program. The CD Commission will consider the dollar amount of the bond cap at its March 27 meeting.

HUD Technical Assistance is helping develop a model agreement for the HOME Consortium. HUD has challenged the Consortium to put its agreements and relationships into writing and to create a flow chart and by-laws. City staff has filed a notice of intent to renew the Urbana HOME Consortium.

Ms. Tyler noted the Executive Director of the Housing Authority has resigned. The Cities of Urbana and Champaign are working with the Housing Authority in the transition period and also for the search of a new executive director. The Housing Authority selected Brinshore Michaels as the developer for Burch Village and Lakeside Terrace. Staff is working with the interim director and Brinshore Michaels on redevelopment of Lakeside Terrace. The Housing Authority is moving from the predevelopment activities into the actual development planning. They are looking at the site area, number of units, Consolidated Plan goals, finding other locations to make up for any units that cannot be developed at Lakeside Terrace, and development and funding expectations for the City of Urbana.

Chairperson Cobb asked if the Housing Authority is leaning toward one configuration. Ms. Tyler replied the earlier site plans were background options, and she believed there will be new options. Brinshore Michaels, which will have its own development models, will need to design and plan the project for market success and to meet the HUD guidelines.

Chairperson Cobb asked if staff has targeted a number of lots for acquisition. Mr. Grewe noted there was \$100,000 in the CDBG budget for property acquisition, and \$10,000 must be reserved for lot maintenance. When considering demolition and other costs, staff hopes to purchase two or three lots.

In response to Chairperson Cobb, Mr. Grewe stated the Village of Rantoul was a member of the Urbana HOME Consortium for one year; however, it is no longer a member.

Referencing the flow chart for the Urbana HOME Consortium, Commissioner Lewis said this would be helpful for the public and the CD Commission to better understand the interrelationships of the entities.

Old Business: **Draft FY 2003-2004 Annual Action Plan** – Mr. Grewe announced there will be a public hearing on the Draft Annual Action Plan on March 10, 2003 at 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. He outlined the additional information obtained since the last meeting. He noted the State of Illinois will review all Illinois First Grants individually before being released. Many grant applicants had hoped to use Illinois First Grants as matching funds.

Eads Street Development Corporation – Mr. Johnson has not yet submitted supplemental budget information.

United Citizens and Neighbors (UCAN) – Staff had noted earlier that UCAN’s failure to submit an audit made their application incomplete. However, due to disparity about audit requirements, staff asks that the CD Commission consider UCAN’s application based on its merits. Chairperson Cobb remarked the cost of an audit almost totals the amount UCAN will receive from Neighborhood Organization Grant (NOG) funds. Mr. Grewe noted many subgrantees provide audits because the agencies meet the federal threshold requirement.

Streetlighting – The money will help complete the project, realize cost savings and result in more timely expenditure of grant funds.

Champaign Urbana Public Health District is not ready to proceed with the School Based Health Center. There were changes to financing the project. Mr. Remmert requested additional guidance to help develop a School Based Health Center.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program changes included increasing the Emergency Grant/Access Grant Program by \$20,000, which is similar to the previous year’s funding. The Developmental Services Center funding was reduced by \$20,000.

Home Investment Partnership Act (HOME) Program changes included changes to the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) set-aside. CHDO 15% set-aside – Urban League funds were reduced. If more than \$14,999 is invested in a house for their Lease Purchase Program, other federal regulations would take effect. Homestead funds were increased by \$3,050, which is the remainder of the set-aside account. HUD HOME rules require 15% of the HOME grant be provided to CHDOs. CHDO 5% set-aside – Urban League funds are increased by \$350.

The Tenant Based Rent Assistance (TBRA) was reduced by \$91,175 while program changes are being considered. Mr. Grewe mentioned concerns and possible changes. \$91,175 is budgeted for a new line item, New Housing Construction. If resources allow, staff may request proposals for affordable housing similar to the completion of Eads at Lincoln Subdivision project. If there are not enough resources this year, future funds may be added.

The City of Champaign staff provided their revised budget for Champaign’s HOME allocation.

Noting any contingency can push a project over budget, Commissioner Lewis wondered how realistic the \$14,999 limit was for Urban League. Mr. Loschen replied that Urban League is purchasing, not constructing, homes already on the market. The City of Urbana provides \$14,999 on the closing sheet.

In response to Chairperson Cobb and Commissioner Lewis, Mr. Grewe explained how staff would provide perspective on the Draft Annual Action Plan. Commissioner Lewis felt this would help applicants understand how decisions are made for the Annual Action Plan.

Working Draft – Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice – Mr. Grewe stated the City of Urbana must create an analysis of impediments to fair housing because the City receives entitlement funds from HUD. The City is required to report in its CAPER what it has done to address these impediments. This draft includes the Urbana Human Rights Ordinance and Urbana Visitability Ordinance. The AI will be referenced in the 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan. The goal is to provide a document to City Council for recommendation.

Mr. Grewe distributed a written summary from Annalise Fonza, who gathered information earlier. Melissa Headley prepared the current draft Analysis of Impediments. Mr. Grewe briefly summarized the parts to the AI and noted a survey instrument will be done in the future. Ms. Tyler added that staff used the census data analysis and interviewed key informants rather than doing a residential survey as in 1991. Noting children and families need access to resources to grow intellectually, Commissioner Thakkar felt a lack of opportunities for education should be added to the factors listed on page 2. Mr. Grewe agreed that education is a component.

Regarding jurisdictional background, Mr. Grewe said the map on page 11 highlighted the census tracts. Commissioner Shisler requested a map with borders and major streets to better identify census tracts. Mr. Grewe noted the AI addresses economic development because income is related to housing choices. Noting the large number of jobs at the University of Illinois, Commissioner Lewis asked if there is a comparative analysis of types of occupations. Ms. Tyler said the Economic Development Corporation created a labor study that examines the unemployment rate. This study, which may be found on the City's web site, provides a breakdown of employment. In response to Commissioner Shisler, Commissioner Lewis said the "S" in the table headings on pages 13-14 stood for "State." Mr. Grewe explained there is a state and US average of a certain type of economic activity. The location quotient (LQ) indicates how the area exceeds or is below that average. Ms. Tyler noted there was no total and more footnotes were needed.

Mr. Grewe stated that school enrollment is based on where a student lives. Commissioner Shisler asked staff to include the census tract for each school's location. Ms. Tyler noted there is a more recent report card on the Urbana School District. Commissioner Silvis commented that census tracts do not match school's enrollment areas. Although an elementary school is located in a certain census tract, the school does not necessarily have students from that census tract. Commissioner Lewis noted the issue of students' location relative to the census tract is complex. Commissioner Thakkar stated the total number of students would likely be the same; however, the race and ethnic makeup would be different.

Mr. Grewe stated the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA), which is available from the Internet, is difficult to interpret. The number of completed loans does not correspond to the number of loan applications. Mr. Loschen added that the census tracts go beyond the city's limits. Mr. Grewe noted all Urbana banks meet or exceed the rating for the Community Reinvestment Act.

Mr. Grewe stated that Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) bus stops are within three blocks of Urbana residents. Because the area is well served, this is not considered an impediment.

Concerning the housing profile, Mr. Grewe stated that rental activity is prevalent in this university community. The table on page 17 shows rental activity by census tract. Ms. Tyler felt that a map with percentages would be more readable. Commissioner Shisler suggested color transparencies.

Commissioner Shisler asked how long people waited for Section 8 vouchers and how this wait compared to other communities across the nation. Ms. Rasmussen replied the wait is two years, and the waiting list is closed at this time. The Housing Authority has not yet determined when the list would be re-opened. She noted the Housing Authority has an interim director, and the Section 8 program is currently short-staffed. Chairperson Cobb inquired about exceptions to the normal waiting list procedures. Ms. Rasmussen answered that persons with disabilities are given preference; persons in city programs are not associated with the Section 8 waiting list. It also takes a long time to verify eligibility of applicants. In response to Commissioner Shisler, Ms. Rasmussen said the length of time is typical statewide. She is not sure about the wait throughout the country.

Commissioner Lewis asked if there is enough housing stock. Ms. Rasmussen noted that university students impact the amount of available rental housing. Because Section 8 requires rental housing to meet quality standard inspections, many rental units are disqualified.

Ms. Tyler clarified that the Champaign County Tenant Union is not slow to respond; the process to redress complaints of discrimination is slow. The process involves landlords, the communities, etc.

Melissa Headley discussed the Fair Housing Trends Report. She noted the drop in the number of complaints is not just local but nation-wide. Persons do not have time to go through a long process because they need to secure housing. Mr. Grewe added that just because the Tenant Union is not hearing about discrimination, we cannot assume it is not happening. Commissioner Thakkar said the nature, not just the number, of complaint is important. He suggested a closer look to see if the issues are similar. Ms. Headley noted the appendix included additional information on the nature of complaints. Noting the term "race" is general, Commissioner Thakkar recommended further examination of the issues to determine how to best address them. Ms. Tyler suggested getting 2002 data from the Tenant Union and checking for patterns. She added that Building Safety Division could update the complaint section.

Mr. Grewe noted that Neighborhood Vision Workshops were held during the Comprehensive Plan process. Ms. Headley added the issues and concerns listed on the chart were based on neighborhoods in the City of Urbana.

Ms. Headley explained the section on Affordable Housing was based on the City of Urbana's Consolidated Plan. She discussed the number of people paying over 30% of their income on housing. Mr. Grewe highlighted the City of Urbana's housing rehabilitation programs. The City targets investment in the CDBG target area.

Mr. Grewe stated the City of Urbana's Human Rights Ordinance goes beyond federal requirements.

Ms. Tyler mentioned the Comprehensive Plan update process. She questioned whether the occupancy limit of four unrelated persons per unit impacted affordability. The concern from planning and zoning is regulating the number of unrelated persons living in housing.

Mr. Grewe summarized the City of Urbana's Visitability Ordinance for new construction of one and two family dwelling units. Also, the City's Building Safety Division enforces building codes, which impact affordable housing because minimum life safety standards must always be maintained.

Mr. Grewe reviewed the impediments to fair housing choice in Urbana. Chairperson Cobb asked who would communicate the information to the appropriate agencies. Mr. Grewe answered the City could foster certain things when creating the Annual Action Plan. Ms. Rasmussen recommended including the Analysis of Impediments in the next Consolidated Plan. Once it becomes an objective, it then becomes part of the Annual Action Plan.

Noting the recommendations involved actions by other agencies, Chairperson Cobb asked who would inform the Tenant Union and Human Relations Commission about these recommendations. Mr. Grewe agreed the wording should be changed. Although the Tenant Union and Human Relations Commission have been involved with this draft, Ms. Tyler noted it is beyond the City's jurisdiction to do this. Mr. Grewe said the City will ask for information from other stakeholders. Commissioner Lewis suggested creating inter-organizational agreements. Chairperson Cobb said the purpose of this report is to conduct an analysis and identify impediments to fair housing. After the recommendations, he felt there should be a methodology to implement them. Mr. Grewe said the City of Urbana would defer to other organizations for a leadership role. The City can help with funding. Ms. Rasmussen suggested several objectives to encourage agency participation. Ms. Tyler stated this document is a plan, and a different document would be needed to implement the recommendations.

Commissioner Lewis recommended incorporating the critical elements into the Consolidated Plan. The CD Commission helps establish goals and reviews adherence to the Consolidated Plan. Chairperson Cobb stressed this should not be an academic exercise. Ms. Rasmussen added that Consolidated Plan objectives are addressed if opportunities are available. Staff will evaluate what has not been addressed in the current plan and why. Commissioner Lewis supported follow-up and tracking.

Chairperson Cobb inquired about the Hispanic population and asked if most workers at Solo Cup were Hispanic. Ms. Tyler noted the Hispanic population is growing and the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission is creating a Latino population study. Certain industries, such as hotel/motel, bear witness to the changing labor market. Ms. Rasmussen stated the United Way is the lead entity of interested parties to research and promote the Hispanic population in Champaign/Urbana area. There will be further action on collecting data, impediments, job training, employment, education, housing and youth issues.

Commissioner Lewis asked if this committee was also giving the same consideration to African Americans. Although the African American community has discussed this, Ms. Rasmussen said

nothing of this scope has been started. This particular committee is focusing on the Hispanic population. Commissioner Lewis stated that historically there has not been interest in researching African American issues. He was curious why the committee gave a preference to Hispanics. Ms. Rasmussen responded the organizers of this initiative were Latino, have organized not-for-profit Latino agencies, and came forward to ask for assistance. Ms. Rasmussen felt a similar effort for African Americans would be worthwhile and encouraged Commissioner Lewis to initiate one.

Mr. Grewe noted census tracts 53, 54 and 55 have changed demographically since 1990. The tracts are distinct by race, age and income.

Concerning the City's housing profile, Mr. Grewe noted the high level of rental activity drives up the demand and cost of housing. One dynamic unique to Urbana is the high number of non-family households. He wondered if the housing supply could be adjusted.

Mr. Grewe noted that few incidents of housing discrimination are reported. Ms. Headley added this is a nation-wide problem. She noted residents of the Men's SAFE House did not realize that prior arrest record is one of the protected classes in Urbana. Mr. Grewe said the Urbana City Ordinance goes beyond federal regulations; however, those who would benefit most are not usually aware.

Concerning codes for accommodating disabilities, Ms. Headley said most housing was built before the codes were adopted. The codes apply only to newer housing. Mr. Grewe remarked that Urbana housing stock is older. Chairperson Cobb added that newer housing is more expensive.

Ms. Headley stated that new housing proposals for organizations that serve homeless have encountered great resistance and NIMBYism.

Referencing the transitional housing program, Commissioner Thakkar recommended creating a community based science and technology center to create an environment for informal learning. He envisioned an after-school place where children and parents can come together, similar to many other communities across the nation. When Commissioner Shisler mentioned the Children's Science Museum, Commissioner Thakkar responded that was located in Champaign, and Urbana needs this also. Chairperson Cobb said this should be discussed under a different issue, and he did not understand the connection with making housing more fair. Commissioner Thakkar responded that part of fairness is addressing professional growth. To be an informed citizen one must have access to resources. He felt such an environment would foster community spirit and improve family relations. Commissioner Thakkar wanted residents of affordable housing to have access to such a center. He drew a parallel to a community not having access to a library.

Ms. Rasmussen responded the transitional housing programs provide in-house programs. Programs are also currently available at local not-for-profit agencies such as Prairienet. Ms. Rasmussen believed the information was not widespread and thought perhaps the City could help disseminate the information. Commissioner Thakkar, who was familiar with these approaches, felt the center could not be added and must be embedded. Commissioner Lewis agreed and said

this sounded like the need for a community center. Ms. Tyler suggested adding a section on educational opportunities under access to information.

When he travels, Commissioner Thakkar visits local science and technology centers. He described a visit to a church in Grand Forks, ND where 20-30 children were learning science. He felt there is a responsibility to encourage young children to become informed future citizens.

Commissioner Shisler suggested including the arts and not limiting a center to science and technology. She stated the need for a center would be community development. Commissioner Shisler felt it was not appropriate to have a center be a major focus of analysis of impediments to fair housing. She does not recommend ignoring a center; however, it cannot be given the attention it deserves in this particular report. Commissioner Thakkar, who agreed the arts were important, suggested adding another section and stated fairness is providing opportunity. Although he understood others' concerns, he felt this was a chance to do something different. Discussion continued on the school district, choice, green space, and access to information.

Ms. Tyler wondered if tax rates were an impediment at some level and asked if there were any missing impediments. Mr. Grewe replied that parking requirements do have an effect. Discussion continued on student parking in west Urbana. Ms. Tyler described parking problems in southeast Urbana. Because zoning requirements for parking were low, landlords were not providing enough parking for their tenants. All neighborhoods are experiencing a demand for more parking. Tenants may have to rent a parking space, which impacts their rent.

Mr. Grewe stated that Savannah Green is a good example of how development requirements may be revised to allow for more affordable housing. Commissioner Lewis discussed how the expansion of infrastructure can impact housing quality. He was concerned with building new infrastructure at the expense of upgrading the current. Ms. Tyler said the City of Urbana is in good shape for building out existing subdivisions. The next generation of subdivisions will drive up the cost. She stated new housing construction is pretty affordable to moderate-income families. Commissioner Lewis felt infrastructure costs and zoning projections could severely impact housing stock.

Mr. Grewe commented that realtors and lenders believe Urbana is "ahead of the curve" when it comes to housing discrimination. Commissioner Silvis felt this should be stated, "when addressing housing discrimination."

Along with many themes, Mr. Grewe noted the Analysis of Impediments includes awareness and educational components. He asked commissioners if any common themes were missing. Chairperson Cobb was concerned about the parking situation near the University of Illinois campus. He remarked that the City should provide pamphlets on where to park besides issuing tickets. Ms. Tyler explained the City is good about re-educating each new crop of students. The City does public outreach such as in the Daily Illini, and neighborhood groups also provide parking information. Ms. Tyler suggested the University of Illinois might want to provide additional information about being a good neighbor.

Commissioner Shisler suggested the maps have an overlay that shows parks and any community centers.

Petitions and Communications: Ruth Wyman found the Analysis of Impediments educational and reiterated this should not be just an academic endeavor. She noted the CD Commission is the advisory body to make these recommendations to City Council. She encouraged commissioners to list their priorities and felt many council members would be interested. Ms. Wyman felt it is important to educate homeowners, realtors, and renters and requested the AI be forwarded to the Human Relations Commission. Ms. Wyman mentioned Kankakee's example of using newspaper ads to inform renters of their rights. She suggested placing ads in April (Fair Housing Month) or in August (the beginning of the rental season). She noted the differences between the Cities of Champaign and Urbana regarding past criminal record and source of income including Section 8. Ms. Wyman suggested placing information on UPTV and asking for an allocation in the city budget.

Noting that apartments with more than three units must pass all building codes, Ms. Wyman asked why apartments with less than three units did not have to meet building code requirements. Ms. Tyler responded there are different codes for one to two housing units versus three units. This should be clarified.

Noting the concern about the lower number of discrimination complaints, Ms. Wyman recommended working with the Human Relations Officer. She believed that many people who are looking for housing do not want to be involved with a lawsuit. Ms. Wyman noted that a timeline was added to the Human Rights Ordinance in 2000. Discussion continued on offering a summary sheet outlining the ordinance or a brochure about a person's rights as a renter in Urbana. Ms. Wyman suggested placing the brochures at the entrances to the City Building. Commissioner Shisler suggested providing realtors copies for their offices. Ms. Wyman felt the CD Commission discussions were educational and informative. She encouraged commissioners to recommend what they felt was important.

New Business: None.

Adjournment: Chairperson Cobb adjourned the meeting at 9:32 p.m.

Recorded by Connie Eldridge