

MINUTES OF A MEETING

URBANA DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD

DATE: October 12, 2004

DRAFT

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

PLACE: Urbana City Building – City Council Chambers
400 S. Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brian Adams, Betsey Cronan, Laurie Goscha, Chris Hartman, Michael McCulley, Art Zangerl

MEMBERS ABSENT Jennifer Gentry

STAFF PRESENT: Mayor Tod Satterthwaite; Elizabeth Tyler, Director of Community Development Services; Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: There were none.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Tod Satterthwaite called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

2. MAYOR'S WELCOME TO THE BOARD

Mayor Satterthwaite welcomed the new members to the Development Review Board (DRB). He expressed thankfulness on the behalf of the City of Urbana to the Board members for volunteering their time and expertise. Unlike other boards or commissions in the City of Urbana, the members of the Development Review Board were chosen based on specific interests or criteria. He explained that this was the City's first attempt in mandating design characteristics in any neighborhood in Urbana. The City would be watching to see how this concept works, and if it proved successful, then he would like to see the concept extended to other areas of the City. Therefore, it could be a very important first step for maintaining the kind of development that occurs in the City's neighborhoods from Downtown Urbana to the M.O.R., Mixed-Office Residential Zoning District to neighborhoods that had been in existence for 80 to 100 years.

He believed that the City had been very careful and thoughtful in the process that mandated the change in the Development Review Board and mandated a set of Design Guidelines. Now, the City was at a point where the planning process was over, and it was time to implement those changes.

Mayor Satterthwaite then had City staff and the Development Review Board members introduce themselves to each other.

3. STAFF PRESENTATION

Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager, began by saying that City staff wanted to give the new DRB members a chance to meet before there was an official meeting. Therefore, this meeting would be very informal.

He went on to talk about the history of the MOR Zoning District and the DRB and how they came to be. At the time when the MOR Zoning District was set up, there were some pretty strict development regulations that limited the amount of square footage one could actually achieve in a development. The DRB was set up and consisted of City staff, which included the Director of Community Development Services, the Planning Manager, the Building Safety Division Manager, the City Engineer, and the City Arborist. He believed that the DRB was originally designed to be a quasi-technical staff review and also a public hearing process. It worked pretty well over the last 12 years. There were around 8 to 10 cases. There was a long period of many years when there was not a single case proposed. Then, in 2002, three cases came up at about the same time.

Mr. Kowalski explained that as the DRB went through the process of reviewing those cases, they found it difficult for staff to serve as both members on the board and as City staff trying to help developers at the same time. As City staff, they would meet with the developers prior to the DRB meetings to work on helping create designs that would be satisfactory to both the developers and the City. Then, those designs would go before the DRB. As members of the DRB, the same staff members would then have to vote whether to approve or deny the designs that they had helped to create. This created a lot of concern, so the City Council asked staff to take a look at the Zoning Ordinance regarding the DRB and the MOR Zoning District. Staff reviewed the process and made changes to the DRB by changing it into a commission and by setting up the process to be very clear that it would be a public hearing.

Another change, that City staff made and was approved by the City Council, was the design criteria. City staff put together a Design Guideline booklet for how projects should look in the MOR Zoning District. The Design Guidelines should help any future developers in the MOR Zoning District as well as the DRB. It will give developers an exact idea of what the City wanted or would allow in the MOR.

Elizabeth Tyler, Director of Community Development Services, added that another difficulty was that they were only to look at the site plan and not at the design. It was very difficult to separate these two items. Any design guidance they gave was out of their purview. This restriction was gone. She felt with the changes made to the MOR Zoning District and to the

DRB that it should be much easier for the new DRB members to review the plans, the elevations, and how the whole thing fits together.

Another thing was that the DRB was unique in the powers that the members would have to grant some variances in some cases. They would not always be recommending to the City Council. For the most part, the DRB's action would be the last step in the process. There might be appeal ability to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals, but the DRB would be a pretty important group for any proposal in the MOR.

In relation to the process, Mr. McCulley commented that if he was the architect on a proposed development and he came up with some preliminary ideas based on the Design Guidelines, then he would want to meet with the DRB before he went much further to make sure that he understood what the intentions were. Would a developer get input from the City staff prior to going before the DRB? Mr. Kowalski replied that was typically how it worked. City staff would give a future developer a lot of input and meet with the developer regularly. He added that he would like to keep it informal enough so that a developer could go back to the DRB two or three times. However, with the way that the process was setup so that the meetings would be public hearings, they would have to be careful of how cases and meetings were noticed and what kind of input the public would have the ability to make.

Mr. Kowalski went on to say that this was new ground for City staff as far as trying to guide a project in terms of design. Normally, City staff would give a lot of advise for zoning and compatibility with the area in terms of land uses.

Mr. McCulley noted that this was a concern of his. If the DRB were in a situation where a developer was already done with a design of a proposed development, then the DRB would be in a continuous situation. What we might think would be a minor changes in the massing, might actually constitute a total redesign when looking at the overall requirements of a circulation of the building, the square footage, and the layout of the lot. Mr. Kowalski agreed that they would like to get the DRB's input early on. There may be opportunities where the City staff would be able to share information with the DRB. Ms. Tyler stated that it seemed like conceptual sketches would be a good place to start. There could be some pre-application meetings.

City staff and the DRB members reviewed and discussed the following from the Development Review Board book of Information and Helpful Tips:

- City of Urbana Staff
- Membership of the Development Review Board
- Meetings
- Procedures of the Development Review Board
 - Officers – Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary
 - Decisions – Require 2/3 Majority Vote
 - Application and Site Plan Submittal Requirements
 - Site Plan Review Criteria
 - Design Guidelines Review
- Development Review Board By-Laws

- ▶ Meetings
- ▶ Order of Business
- ▶ Procedure for Hearings
- ▶ General Provisions
- ▶ Map of the MOR
- ▶ Intent of the MOR Zoning District
- ▶ Design Guidelines
 - ▶ The “Façade Zone”
 - ▶ Building Orientation & Patterns
 - ▶ Massing & Scale
 - ▶ Openings
 - ▶ Outdoor Living Space: Balconies, Porches & Patios
 - ▶ Materials
 - ▶ Parking Areas
 - ▶ Landscaping
 - ▶ Commercial Site Design
 - ▶ Photo Inventory of Properties in the MOR Zoning District
- ▶ MOR Zoning Description Sheet
 - ▶ Permitted Uses, Special Uses & Conditional Uses
 - ▶ Development Regulations in the MOR District
 - ▶ Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and Open Space Ratio (OSR)
- ▶ Ten Tips for New Commissioners

Ms. Kowalski mentioned that not every proposal that would be made in the MOR would come before the DRB. When the City made changes to the Zoning Ordinance, one of the things they did in an attempt to encourage development in the MOR was to make it administrative review for any adaptive reuse of any existing structure. The Zoning Administrator would determine if the project was compliant with the Design Guidelines. This was also true for minor exterior remodels.

Ms. Goscha commented that it would be interesting to see how it really shakes out. The Site Plan Review Criteria would only be a component of the larger picture. Yet there was so much description about what the Design Guidelines were. She could see herself, as an architect, getting very into the details of how a proposed building was designed when really she should be considering this as a small subset of the five components of the Site Plan Review Criteria. Mr. Kowalski responded by saying that he hoped the DRB would keep the big picture in mind and not to get too hung up on a Platinum window, etc.

Mr. Hartman asked what would happen if someone proposed the adaptive reuse of a currently non-conforming structure? Ms. Tyler answered by saying that non-conformities continue to be legally non-conforming as long as they are not extended. There might be some cases where a variance would be appropriate. Mr. Kowalski added if there was a remodeling job that was pretty extensive, then the DRB could have the latitude to have the petitioner correct the non-conformity. If the building were staying pretty much the same, then they would let the non-conformity continue. Ms. Tyler stated that the City would encourage some adaptation to be closer to the guidelines. The goal for both the administrative review and for the DRB should be to improve projects. The guidelines were in place to guide, not to judge. City staff left the guidelines flexibility, so that the DRB would

be able to work together with the applicant's to improve their projects and to promote development that meets the guidelines.

Mr. Kowalski mentioned that City staff had met with representatives of the First Presbyterian Church a couple of times. Their plans were pretty far along, and they might have even filled out their application. Staff encouraged the First Presbyterian Church to hold out until the DRB could meet at least once to meet each other and get some training. The church would be proposing an addition to the church on the west that would be replacing the existing Korean Church house. From the street it would look like a one-story addition, but in fact, it would actually have a basement, which was what would throw them over the requirements for the FAR. The design was comparable to the existing church in materials and look.

Mr. Hartman inquired about the empty lot across from Dave Barr's new apartment? Mr. Kowalski remarked that was one of the three projects approved by the old Development Review Board. Scott Cochrane owned the lot and was approved for a six-unit apartment building.

Ms. Cronan asked if there was a statute of limitations on constructing a development once approved by the DRB? Mr. Kowalski answered by saying that the Zoning Ordinance stated that a building permit must be applied for within one year. In both cases for 701 and 605 West Green Street, the building permits have been applied for. The City's Building Safety Division reviewed the plans and sent them back to the developer with comments. This keeps going back and forth for a long time. The cases were approved by the DRB more than a year ago, and the applications for the building permits were made within the year's time. There was not necessarily a time date that the developers would need to complete the construction. Ms. Tyler added that there were some drainage issues being worked out between the City and the developer for 701 West Green Street. For 605 West Green Street, there was an easement that needed to be worked out with the adjoining apartment building.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Kowalski, Secretary