

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: January 24, 2002
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Urbana City Building
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Christopher Alix, Michael Pollock, Joseph Rank, Bernadine Stake, Marilyn Upah-Bant

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Alan Douglas, Randy Kangas

STAFF PRESENT: Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager; Tim Ross, Senior Planner; Teri Hayn, Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Laurie Bonnett, Betty Lazaros, Michael Pfundstein, Marilyn Pollard, Kay Romans, Tony Stephens, Susan Taylor

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m., the roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Chair Pollock stated that there was a change to Item #5 – Continued Public Hearings. There was no longer a need for an Interim Development Moratorium, because the City Council had already taken action on the recommendation of the Plan Commission regarding Plan Case #1810-T-01.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Rank moved to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2002 meeting. Ms. Stake seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

Although, there were no written communications regarding plan cases, Chair Pollock mentioned the conference at the University of Illinois sponsored by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning on “Planning Matters” set for March 7 – March 8 of 2002.

Ms. Stake inquired as to whether the registration for the commissioners would be paid by the City of Urbana. Mr. Kowalski responded that the City of Urbana had been asked to sponsor the conference. It was unclear as to how many people the City of Urbana could send to the conference by being a sponsor. He added that when Ms. Tyler returned from San Diego, she would be able to find out how many people the City would be allowed to send to this conference.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case 1811-T-01, Request by Zoning Administrator to amend the Zoning Ordinance to extend the existing Interim Development Ordinance (IDO) for 60 days, which will continue the moratorium on the issuance of permits for Outdoor Advertising Sign Structures (OASS or billboards).

This case was withdrawn as explained under Item 2 - Changes to Agenda.

6. OLD BUSINESS

CCZBA-273-AT-00, Request by the Zoning Administrator for an omnibus text amendment to the Champaign County Zoning Ordinance to amend Sections 6.1 and 9.1.11 to require that a reclamation agreement and performance guarantee be provided to the County for removal of a structure or physical change to a site that is found to be not readily adaptable to an alternative use.

Rob Kowalski, Planning Manager, presented the staff report. He introduced this case by giving a background on the history of this case. He summarized the staff findings and read the options of the Plan Commission. Mr. Kowalski stated that staff recommended that the Plan Commission forward this case to the City Council with a recommendation to defeat a resolution of protest for the proposed text amendment based upon staff findings.

Ms. Stake moved that the Plan Commission forward this plan case to the City Council with a recommendation to defeat a resolution of protest. Mr. Alix seconded the motion. The roll call was as follows:

Mr. Pollock	-	Yes	Mr. Rank	-	Yes
Ms. Stake	-	Yes	Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes
Mr. Alix	-	Yes			

The motion was passed by a unanimous vote of 5-0 and the plan case was forwarded to City Council for action.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case 1812-T-01, Request by Zoning Administrator to amend the Zoning Ordinance regarding Community Event Electronic Display Signs.

Tim Ross, Senior Planner, gave the staff presentation regarding this plan case. He presented a brief introduction and background regarding electronic display signs. The proposed amendment would allow electronic display signs that display both community event messages and commercial messages, subject to the Zoning Administrator's approval. He noted that the legislative intent and findings were based on the Comprehensive Plan principles. He discussed how the proposed Downtown Strategic Plan relates to Lincoln Square Mall and the advantages of an electronic display sign. Mr. Ross continued his presentation by reviewing the proposed amendments, which were as follows:

1. *To amend Section IX-6 and IX-7, Use of Noncommercial Signs in Business and Industrial Zoning Districts, by adding the following:*

- C. *Community Event Signs Requiring a Permit*

5. *Electronic Display Sign*

Permanent signs providing notice of community events on a continuous basis by means of electronic display may be permitted with Zoning Administrator approval, subject to the placement and size limitations contained within this subsection. Community events information and/or time/temperature announcements must constitute more than 50% of the sign content in order to be considered a noncommercial sign. Commercial related information may otherwise be displayed, but shall not exceed 49% of the sign content.

2. *To amend Section IX-7, Prohibited Signs, with new text indicated by underlining to read as such:*

- A. *The following signs are specifically prohibited by this Ordinance:*

4. *Any sign which contains blinking, flashing lights, unless such lights are permitted in Section IX-5 or IX-6.*

Mr. Ross summarized the staff findings and read the options of the Plan Commission. He stated that based on the evidence presented in the staff report, and without the benefit of considering additional evidence that may be presented at the public hearing, staff recommended that the Plan Commission recommend approval of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked if the non-functional display sign that Lincoln Square Mall currently is using was not repairable? Mr. Ross answered that the sign had not functioned for several years and was built with a technology that is unable to be upgraded or repaired. The sign was not designed to function in this type of climate.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked how many electronic display signs could be placed around the mall? Mr. Ross explained that, according to the Zoning Ordinance, the proposed sign would take the place of any freestanding sign. Therefore, an electronic display sign could replace every freestanding sign that Lincoln Square Mall currently has. Ms. Upah-Bant asked if there could be five? Mr.

Ross replied that there could be a sign for every 300 linear feet. Mr. Kowalski added that the number of signs allowed would depend on the number of linear feet of the property.

Tony Stephens, of Lincoln Square Mall, responded to Ms. Upah-Bant's questions by saying that Lincoln Square Mall spent approximately \$1,500 last year investigating whether they would be able to get the current sign working again. They discovered that the sign was not repairable. In regards to the number of signs that would be allowed, he stated that although Lincoln Square Mall may have the right to erect other signs, as a practical matter, they would be willing to represent to the Plan Commission that Lincoln Square Mall would limit the electronic display signs to one to be placed on Illinois and Vine Streets. The practical matter is that the cost of the proposed electronic display sign will be approximately \$30,000.

Mr. Alix inquired as to why electronic display signs were originally restricted. Mr. Ross responded that there were two main reasons, which were as follows: 1) conditions for preserving the scenic value (essentially the aesthetics of the landscape) and 2) the safety issues. After speaking with the City Engineering staff and in reviewing some of the available research, the evidence that signage has a lot to do with traffic safety is weak. Safety concern is not much of a factor today. It comes down to the aesthetics being the biggest factor.

Mr. Alix questioned if "time and temperature" signs that are displayed on banks were non-conforming? Mr. Ross answered that there was a provision in the same section of the Zoning Ordinance regarding "time and temperature" signs. It states that these signs are permitted up to 26 square feet in area. Mr. Kowalski added that some of the regulations in the Zoning Code originated from the City's first Zoning Code.

Ms. Stake asked if the sign would be allowed to blink? Mr. Ross replied that the proposed sign would be allowed to be animated and to some extent to blink. However, the Zoning Administrator is given a certain level of latitude under the proposed language to work out plans of how the messages would be displayed.

Ms. Stake questioned if a permit would need to be applied for? Mr. Ross responded that was correct, since there was a performance standard of 50% built into the proposal. Ms. Stake inquired as to what the 50% represented. Mr. Ross replied that there was a provision that more than 50% of the messages would need to be either "time and temperature" or "community event" messages.

Ms. Stake inquired as to what zoning districts that these signs would be allowed. Mr. Ross stated that electronic display signs would be allowed in business and industrial zoning districts. Ms. Stake asked if there was a business close to a residential area, then the business would be allowed to have an electronic sign blinking on and off across from a house? Mr. Kowalski answered that for business and industrial zones, there is a provision that states as follows: *There shall be no freestanding signs permitted within 50' of any residential district where the nearest lot contains a dwelling unit, public school, park, hospital, or nursing home.* Ms. Stake commented that 50' was not very far in regards to a blinking sign.

Ms. Stake stated that people were complaining about not knowing what stores were offered in Lincoln Square Mall. She felt that there should be a sign listing the various stores.

Chair Pollock asked if this proposal called for giving the right of approval to the Zoning Administrator? Mr. Ross replied yes. Chair Pollock asked if the owners of Lincoln Square Mall wanted to put up additional message boards at the other entrances, would the Zoning Administrator have the ability to approve the signs? Mr. Ross stated that was correct. Wherever a sign would be allowed a freestanding sign, that allowance could be used for a community event sign with a permit with the approval of the Zoning Administrator.

Ms. Stake questioned why it would not be sent back to the City Council for approval of a permit? Mr. Ross responded that it would be a regular sign permit not like a special use permit. There are other signs that are allowed in the Zoning Ordinance that do not require any kind of permit; however, the proposed type is not one of those. Ms. Stake stated that maybe it should be considered a special use. Mr. Kowalski remarked that it was not really a use of land like a residential or commercial use. It would just be a sign. The permitting process for a sign is as follows: *1) detailed site plans have to be drawn up by an architect, 2) those site plans are submitted to the City of Urbana Building Safety Division, 3) Building Safety Division review the site plans against the regulations, and 4) if the site plans comply with the Zoning Ordinance, then a permit is issued to build the sign.*

Mr. Kowalski added that if the sign were to be an electronic display sign, then the Zoning Administrator would review the site plans as well. There is a level of review, but not with the Plan Commission and City Council. Ms. Stake felt that the signs need more review by the Plan Commission and the City Council, because it is land and certainly impacts the whole community.

Mr. Alix questioned if the Zoning Administrator has the power to decline to permit a sign that already meets all the requirements and regulations. Mr. Ross answered that if the owners of the signs cannot show that they can meet the requirement to display the community events messages a certain amount of time, then a permit can be denied. Mr. Alix questioned if the permit could only be denied for some non-conformity with the requirements? Mr. Ross replied that was correct.

Mr. Stephens and the other owners of Lincoln Square Mall felt that the proposed sign is needed. Lincoln Square Mall has oriented toward promoting community events. As a result, the owners have seen a pretty substantial increase in sales. The owners felt that increase in sales was generated by the traffic driven by the community events. The proposed electronic display sign would allow Lincoln Square Mall to take better advantage of the community events. The message board would not be used only for community events as they relate to Lincoln Square Mall. Their intent is to inform the Park District, the Library, Urbana Business Association, and other community groups of the availability of the sign on a free basis. The third reason is that with the announcement of Bergner's vacating Lincoln Square Mall, the owners feel that their capital investment in the property is needed not only to facilitate more traffic, but also to send a message to the public that Lincoln Square Mall is there and intends to continue to be there.

Ms. Upah-Bant commented that the picture of the sign in the staff report appeared to have a trailer underneath it. Mr. Stephens responded that the electronic sign in the picture was a model. The City of Urbana arranged to have the model placed in the parking lot for 72 hours, so that interested citizens and Council members could look at the sign and give feedback regarding the

sign to the owners of Lincoln Square Mall. The proposed sign that would go into the existing casing would be the exact same size as the model in the picture. The electronic display would go in both the south and north sides of the sign structure.

Mr. Alix stated that he had nothing against what Lincoln Square owners were attempting to do. It would be a real asset. His concern was in the context of the general ordinance. He felt that the Plan Commission should be cautious about opening the door to allowing electronic display signs. He was also concerned with the impact that other electronic signs would have on surrounding properties, both aesthetic (distraction or annoyance to neighborhood properties) and safety (distracting motorists from traffic signals or signs appearing to look like vehicular lighting). He suggested that the Plan Commission add restrictions regarding height, the luminosity, the hours of operation, whether animation is allowed, and control the rate at which the messages change. Instead of allowing these types of signs because 50% of the content would be community messages, he would rather come up with a way of allowing electronic signs that are reasonable by adding those restrictions. The Plan Commission and the City Council might want to be more explicit about the percentage of content, whether it means 50% of the time during a given hour or given day.

Mr. Ross responded that the Zoning Ordinance already prohibits any signs intended to look like or imitate a traffic control device. Any sign that is considered to be a traffic hazard is also prohibited. In regards to the community event information, Mr. Ross mentioned that the intent was to make it a little more difficult for every business owner in B-4 and B-4E to obtain one of these sign permits. The subsection of the ordinance in which electronic display signs are proposed to be located restricts them to B-4 and B-4E only.

Mr. Alix commented that the community event information would make it more expensive for business owners to have these signs, because they are required to dedicate half of the usage of these signs to advertise community events. However, it does not mean that every business down the street could not have an electronic sign. He added that he was not familiar the language in the Zoning Ordinance regarding traffic hazards. He would recommend to City Council to require that the signs be designed so as to minimize the impact on adjacent properties. This would allow the Zoning Administrator sufficient leeway to be able to determine whether a sign would be appropriate or not. He stated that he would be inclined to support this proposal.

Ms. Stake felt that there needed to be more studying and more work on writing the ordinance. She does not want these types of signs all over the City. Mr. Ross responded that electronic display signs are only to be applicable in B-4 and B-4E, which would primarily be in Downtown Urbana and outlying portions of the Downtown. There is a small pocket of B-4 on Goodwin Avenue in the area of campustown.

Ms. Stake commented that signs are a traffic hazard if they are not helpful. She added that signs have become a property problem as well. Therefore, these signs should require special use permits.

Mr. Rank felt that the proliferation of electronic display signs would be limited by the number of businesses that could afford the investment in this kind of sign. The City of Urbana would be lucky to have more businesses that could afford this investment. There is a Bergner's space to

fill, an empty Jewel/Osco at Sunnycrest, and likely soon to be a K-Mart to be filled. The more restrictive that the City of Urbana gets in these types of restrictions, then the less likely any major retailer will want to go through the public hearing processes for all the special use permits and the extra things that they will not have to do in the Village of Savoy or in the City of Champaign. The City of Urbana relies on the businesses, and that tax revenue is shrinking. The more restrictions that are placed on business, then the more difficult it will be to attract the kind of businesses that will provide the tax revenues. He felt this was a reasonable request and would be a no-risk ordinance.

Ms. Upah-Bant stated that the City of Urbana just spent about six months deciding whether more billboards would be allowed or not. She added that she personally does not like electronic display signs. She would be willing to see this type of sign at Lincoln Square Mall, because she agreed it is a pro-business kind of thing to try. She did not agree about the proliferation of these types of signs. She asked if the Plan Commission or City Council could institute a special use requirement? Mr. Kowalski explained that a special use is related to the land use of the property, whether it is commercial or residential. The role of the Plan Commission is to determine if a rezoning or land use of a property is appropriate. Issues of signs, parking, setbacks, and other related items have regulations in the Zoning Code. In some rare examples like electronic display signs, the Zoning Administrator has latitude to make an interpretation, because not everything can be spelled out in black and white. If someone wants to vary from the requirement, then there is a process to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals. Since there would not be a variance in the types of electronic signs, then the Plan Commission and the City Council could not apply a special use process. Ms. Upah-Bant asked about making it a conditional use? Mr. Kowalski replied that it would be the same concept.

Mr. Ross mentioned that some communities have enacted an extensive design criteria review. The best way to go about further review would be to fold all such issues into a design review. That would require a major investment. In the past, there had not been enough support for a design review.

Ms. Stake commented that she wants Lincoln Square Mall, Sunnycrest, and other businesses to prosper. She was not convinced that whether a business prospers or not depended upon the signage. She felt that signs are property; therefore, there is a way to make them a special use. Signs impact the whole community. If there are too many signs, then business owners will not want to come to Urbana, because the community would be too ugly. She did not feel that this proposal was restrictive enough. She could not support it as it was proposed.

Chair Pollock remarked that after hearing the discussion regarding this case, he was convinced that this proposal was a good idea. There is a disconnect between encouraging business to locate in the City of Urbana, supporting business in the City, and then telling the business that they would have to go through a special use process by coming before the Plan Commission, filing for permits, and going before the City Council just to put up a sign. From his experience of previously being a business owner, Chair Pollock stated that signage is the lifeblood for a business. He believed that proliferation of this type of sign was not possible because of the limited area in which they could be put, the pricey cost of a sign of this kind, and also because of the requirement that there be community content displayed on the signs. Community content would allow a positive aspect with each future electronic display sign permitted and approved.

Chair Pollock reminded the Plan Commission that there was a light in the current sign at one time. It helped promote community events. It was not a traffic hazard. It was not a huge distraction to anyone. The Plan Commission and the City Council would just be allowing them to replace that sign. He felt that this would not only help the existing businesses in Lincoln Square Mall, but also perhaps attract additional businesses. It might help the owners to successfully redevelop the mall.

Ms. Stake asked how Chair Pollock felt about placing restrictions on the electronic signs as to whether they can be animated or not, hours of operation, and how commercial and public events are stated on the signs? She did not want them to proliferate. Chair Pollock responded that as a commissioner and as a planner, one should look at all the possible scenarios. If the Plan Commission wanted to clarify the requirements and obligations of the sign owner are, he would not have a problem with it. He added that it would be a mistake to remove the community-content component from this proposal.

Ms. Stake inquired as to how far does the business district in downtown Urbana go? Does it include areas that are across from residential neighborhoods? Mr. Ross replied that was correct. There are areas that are B-4 with residential across the street. Ms. Stake suggested that the Plan Commission require that these signs not be allowed across from residential areas. Mr. Ross responded that there was a spacing requirement already of 50 feet. Ms. Stake commented that 50 feet was not far enough away to keep a blinking light from bothering a resident. Mr. Ross stated that suggestion could be added to the language as a condition.

Ms. Stake made a motion for the Plan Commission to recommend to City Council to not allow these signs to be placed across the street from residential areas. Chair Pollock asked staff how the Plan Commission should go about making this recommendation? Mr. Kowalski answered that there needed to be some kind of measurement, so that there would not be an arbitrary decision of whether the sign would be considered across the street or not. Chair Pollock asked for approval from Ms. Stake to allow for an amendment to the motion, so that the motion would recommend to City Council to approve this plan case and to recommend that City Council consider an increase in the minimum linear distance between any one of these signs and any residential zoning district. Ms. Stake agreed to the amendment. Mr. Rank seconded the motion.

Mr. Alix commented that the motion sounded legitimate. He stressed that his concern was not with this proposed sign in particular or about wanting to impose overly restrictive conditions on business. His concern was that if the City of Urbana was going to open the door to electronic signs, that the City take a look at what other companies are doing out in the world with electronic signs. The Plan Commission and City Council need to attach conditions to the Zoning Ordinance to minimize adverse effects on adjacent uses.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked if other cities limited the number of lumens or the flashing rate? She does not like the electronic sign at the Assembly Hall. It is very bright and flashes often early in the morning and late at night. Mr. Ross responded that Champaign has a provision for electronic signs for structures that can house 10,000 people or more. It is tied to the use of the land. It is for large-scale community events only. Chair Pollock added that the sign at the Assembly Hall was constructed without the approval of the City of Champaign by the University of Illinois,

under the idea that the land belongs to the University of Illinois and the University does not have to follow the City's Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked Ms. Stake, the motioner, and Mr. Rank, the seconder, if they would accept another friendly amendment to the motion to include that the City Council consider not only an increase in the spacing requirements, but consider additional limitations for lumens and flash rates as well. Ms. Stake and Mr. Rank approved the amendment.

The roll call was as follows:

Mr. Rank	-	Yes	Ms. Stake	-	Yes
Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes	Mr. Alix	-	Yes
Mr. Pollock	-	Yes			

The motion was passed by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

Plan Case 1813-CP-02, Request by the Zoning Administrator to add the Downtown Strategic Plan as an amendment to the Urbana Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Kowalski presented an updated staff report of this plan case from the study session during the last Plan Commission meeting. He gave a brief introduction and background noting the hard work of the consultant, Camiros, Ltd. and the Downtown Plan Steering Committee. Mr. Kowalski reviewed the changes from the original final draft since December 14, 2001. He explained that most of the changes were minor. One of the major changes was adding language to promote public art downtown. The other major changes to the draft were in the section on the Lincoln Square Initiative to paint a better picture of what the mall means to the City of Urbana and how it fits in Urbana's history, to consider the mall more of a community retail center, and to reintroduce the concept of a public market inside the mall.

Mr. Kowalski explained that the concept of the Post Office building being used in the future as a public market should be stricken from the draft. Somehow that concept kept making it through draft after draft without being noticed. He asked the Plan Commission to disregard that concept.

Mr. Kowalski stated that the reason why there were not very many people at the public hearing to talk about the proposed plan was because staff had shown the plan around quite a bit. People have seen it and are aware of the concepts in the plan. There was some correspondence received regarding the proposed plan. One correspondence was from the Urbana Postal Customer Advisory Council, which stated their concern about the rendering that shows the public square. They are concerned about the parking being lost. Mr. Kowalski stated that the plan was conceptual. It shows for designs for parks, apartments, and stores. Those designs do not have to be in the locations shown on the rendering. As a result, a disclaimer was added regarding the rendering.

Mr. Kowalski addressed the concern of the turnaround and Post Office parking being turned into a park. He stated that the Post Office building is currently for sale with two different conditions, which are as follows: 1) a buyer allows the Post Office to remain in the building rent free and 2) the Post Office relocates somewhere else downtown Urbana. The commitment from the Post

Office was that they would stay in downtown Urbana. It does not necessarily mean that the Post Office has to stay in that building. There are many uncertainties with what will happen to that building, who might buy it, and how it may be used. The City of Urbana believes that the overall design concept of a plaza at that location is still a valid one and a good one to consider in the future. As long as the Post Office is located in that building, the City of Urbana will not propose to remove the parking and build a park. The twelve parking spaces are valued by thousands of people in the community.

Mr. Rank questioned if the turnaround was to be vacated, then it would have to come before the Plan Commission and City Council? Mr. Kowalski explained that usually a vacation means that a street is vacated and the property goes to the adjacent landowners. In this case, if a park were built there, then the property would stay as City right-of-way. It might have to go through City Council for an ordinance. Mr. Rank asked if there would be public input at that time? Mr. Kowalski replied that there would be public input at the City Council level.

Mr. Kowalski continued with his presentation by reviewing the summary of staff findings. He read the options of the Plan Commission and stated the staff recommendation, which was as follows: *Staff recommended that the Plan Commission forward this plan case to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation for approval.*

Mr. Alix inquired about the railroad conversion to pedestrian walkways. He asked if City staff had specific information that indicates that it was to be abandoned at a particular time? Mr. Kowalski answered that the City staff was not aware of any immediate plans for the railroad to be abandoned. The railroad was still in use for Solo Cup. Mr. Alix stated that his concern was that the City might be sending the wrong message to existing industrial users as well as to potential users east of High Cross Road. Mr. Kowalski mentioned that the language could be changed to say, "if the railroad becomes abandoned".

Laurie Bonnett, Executive Director of Urbana Business Association, suggested that the Plan Commission look closely at this proposal as an opportunity to revive the City of Urbana. One of the Urbana Business Association's missions has been to promote downtown Urbana with an influx of money from the City for advertising. Their mission recently expanded when they merged with the Build Urbana group. Their mission now includes putting rooftops in the City. It makes sense to promote the community of Urbana, instead of just one part of Urbana. Downtown Urbana needs a lot of help and support. The group that has come together to volunteer their time, money and effort is very supportive of this Downtown Plan.

Mr. Stephens stated that Lincoln Square has as much at stake with this plan as any other business in town. This proposal is strictly a plan and vision. There may be some people in the community who want to nigger about various points in the plan. He suggested that the Plan Commission not engage in that too much and to take a high altitude vision of this plan. He felt it was a wonderful plan.

Ms. Stake asked if Mr. Stephens felt that there was a possibility that the second floor of Lincoln Square could ever be built? Mr. Stephens stated that Lincoln Square has development rights above Bergner's, which would be the third floor. They are currently looking at a number of different options for the third floor.

Marilyn Pollard, of 2701 Myra Ridge, was pleased that the City of Urbana has admitted that it is their responsibility to help with Lincoln Square. The area where the turnaround and Post Office parking are needs to be more attractive to invite people into the mall to shop. As far as the interior of Lincoln Square Mall, it is too dark and could use some modern decorating. The bathrooms are located downstairs, which is very inconvenient for people with strollers. Bathrooms should be installed upstairs as well. In regards to signage, the Lincoln Square signs need to be replaced, because they are hard to read. There should also be a sign outside that lists what stores are available inside the mall. Do not make it look old. Make the mall look current, and it will attract business.

Mike Pfundstein, Postmaster of Urbana, stated that in addition to signage, parking is also the lifeblood of business. The Post Office understands that this plan is conceptual, there is a long process involved, and that this plan is not set in stone. Personally, he liked the whole plan. His concern is the loss of parking for the Post Office in exchange for a park. Many customers like the turnaround. It allows the customers a place to park, run in, get their mail, and leave without having to walk a long way. If the twelve parking spaces are replaced with a park, then there will be no parking spaces within a block except for the parking garage.

Although the Post Office building is for sale, the Post Office has made a commitment to remain in Downtown Urbana whether it would be in the building they currently are or somewhere else. The Post Office is open to any type of offers as far as selling the building. He felt that someone needed to voice this concern of the Post Office before it was too late.

Ms. Stake mentioned that she had attended all of the meetings regarding the new Post Office. The public was disappointed that the new Post Office was not built in Downtown Urbana. She appreciated that the Post Office was committed to Downtown Urbana. She asked what was the thought about the Post Office when the design of the park was created? Mr. Kowalski replied that from day one, the illustration for the park was with the understanding that the Post Office may not be at that location for a long time. The last thing that the City of Urbana would do would be to build a park and drive away the Post Office. It would not be a good idea politically or practically. The park depends on whether the Post Office stays in that building.

Mr. Pfundstein remarked that the parking in front of the building enhances the sale price. The less money that the Post Office gets from the sale, the harder it would be for them to find a suitable location somewhere else downtown.

Ms. Stake commented that not very many people visit the new Post Office. Most of Urbana's residents use the downtown Post Office.

Richard Wolfe, Chairman of the Urbana Postal Customer Advisory Council, reiterated that some ideas get into a plan and manage to stay in after many revisions. It is important to emphasize the problem with the possible suppression of the parking in front of the Post Office for the reasons that had already been mentioned.

The Urbana Postal Customer Advisory Council was formed about the same time that the construction on the new Post Office began. One of the Council's main areas of focus is to insist and work on maintaining a good level of postal service in the downtown area.

Mr. Wolfe continued to say that overall, the plan is beautiful. The parking in front of the Post Office is just one quirk in the plan. On the idea of the Post Office leaving, the possibility of the parking being replaced by a park causes a problem with selling the property. Potential buyers are interested more in buying the property if the parking spaces remain.

Mr. Stephens stated that he understood the concerns of the Post Office. He went on to say that whether or not the Post Office stays in that location, Lincoln Square wants to have a cooperative approach with their neighboring business. While talking with potential buyers for the Post Office property, it was discussed how they would integrate their issues. One of those issues discussed was parking. Mr. Stephens reminded the Plan Commission that there is a \$3,000,000 parking deck less than 50 feet away from the existing Post Office. Lincoln Square has indicated a willingness to work with any potential purchaser as to the use of the lot directly east of the existing Post Office to be used as parking.

Mr. Stephens stated that just as the plan was composed by creative minds, he felt that if there were any parking issues to prevent themselves in the ultimate use of that business, then there could be a co-existence of a parking solution with that park. He did not feel that one necessarily excludes the other.

Ms. Stake asked where in the plan did it mention the Post Office? Mr. Kowalski replied that there was very little language about the fate of the Post Office or what might happen to the building. Ms. Stake commented that a lot of the plan is unknown, and the Post Office is important.

Betty Lazarus, 502 West Vermont, questioned if Mr. Kowalski had access to the poll that the Survey Research Lab did on the use of the downtown Post Office? She added that many people use that time to shop Downtown Urbana. People felt so strongly about keeping the Post Office in the downtown area, because it was one of the things that made Downtown Urbana viable. Mr. Kowalski remarked that the Downtown Plan does not recommend getting rid of the Post Office. Ms. Lazarus responded that by replacing the parking with a park would get rid of the Post Office. Mr. Kowalski stated that the concept of the park is debatable. The intent was that the Post Office may move and the building be reused for a different purpose. The park was a design consideration that could be implemented.

Mr. Alix stated that he was extremely impressed by this plan. The amount of work that went into the plan is evident. The consultant did a terrific job. All the citizens who provided input and the City staff who coordinated the input should be commended.

Mr. Alix added that as being a business owner in the Downtown Urbana area, this plan is near and dear to his heart. There is not much emphasis on the downtown office uses in the plan. The City of Urbana and the Urbana Business Alliance has done little to attract or support these types of businesses. He felt that was appropriate, because the highest use in the downtown occupancy (especially in the lower floors) is retail. Retail generates sales tax for the City of Urbana. There

are great reasons to work to develop the retail and entertainment market. The reason that a number of office occupancies have chosen to locate downtown is because of the convenience of access to the Post Office in addition to other services. One of the things that are important to maintaining Downtown Urbana's health is continuing to support the type of office and service uses that exist there. Therefore, Mr. Alix suggested adding language in this plan to point out that one of the assets is the Post Office, and that it is an essential component to downtown businesses. Having this additional language in the plan would both signal the City's intention to continue to support the Post Office as well as send a signal to office occupancies that they are welcomed.

Mr. Alix stated that he supported the idea of including additional language in the plan to suggest creative ways in which Lincoln Square's utility to the community and success can be encouraged through the public markets and creative solutions of reuse of the existing structure, whether it is via expansion, redevelopment, change of use, or simply aggressive marketing. He was disappointed to hear that the ideas for which the Lincoln Square site could be redeveloped, should it no longer be economically viable, was being excluded from the plan. Although Lincoln Square is fully expected to thrive, the City of Urbana should face the idea that it may not. There may come a time in the future when the ownership of Lincoln Square decides that the best use for that land is redevelopment at a lower density. It would be appropriate for the City of Urbana to have a plan, which suggested a way in which redevelopment could be done in a way that was appropriate for the rest of the uses downtown. Mr. Alix added that he would like to see that re-included as an alternative.

Ms. Stake asked what was meant by redevelopment? What were the ideas for redevelopment? Mr. Kowalski answered that it essentially meant to tear Lincoln Square Mall down and redevelop the site with some housing and office space focused around a park or square.

Mr. Kowalski agreed with Mr. Alix that this is a plan that should be visionary and long-range. The redevelopment of Lincoln Square Mall should not be immediately dismissed. However, the Downtown Plan Steering Committee felt that this plan was not that long-ranged. They felt that any suggestions for Lincoln Square should be for the next five to ten years.

Ms. Stake stated that this plan should support the other businesses in Downtown Urbana as well as the Urbana Public Library, the Courthouse, and the Post Office, which are all assets to the Downtown area. These businesses and services bring people to the Downtown Urbana area.

Mr. Rank commented that this was a great plan. Whether any of this was built or all of this was built would be purely dependent on private investment. This is a blueprint, a template, and a vision to give developers ideas of what the City of Urbana wants to see. He motioned that the Plan Commission forward this case to the City Council with the recommendation for approval and if necessary the rendering be redone of the north facade of Lincoln Square. Mr. Rank added that the concerns of the Urbana Postal Customer Advisory Council regarding the suppression of parking spaces at the Post Office would be included in the minutes of this meeting for City Council to review. Ms. Upah-Bant seconded the motion.

Chair Pollock stated that Mr. Pfundstein was correct in regards to the people in the City being up in arms about the possibility of losing the postal facility in the downtown area. It should be

included in the language of this plan that the City of Urbana has a commitment to the downtown Post Office and that parking is crucial to the success of the Post Office.

Chair Pollock went on to say that the City of Urbana should support the owners of Lincoln Square in their effort to revitalize the mall. He understood why the section on the possibilities of redevelopment of Lincoln Square property was excluded from the final draft. It would be harder for the owners of Lincoln Square to get the mall to full capacity with businesses if there is a plan floating around with a picture in it of a redeveloped area in place of the mall.

Chair Pollock commented that the City of Urbana got their money's worth by hiring a consultant. With the hard work of the City staff, the consultant, and the residents of Urbana, a fantastic document has been turned out.

The roll call was as follows:

Ms. Stake	-	Yes	Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes
Mr. Alix	-	Yes	Mr. Pollock	-	Yes
Mr. Rank	-	Yes			

The motion was passed by a unanimous vote of 5-0.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Kowalski gave a staff report on the following:

- APA Illinois State Section – Let's Go Public! – Presentation on February 21 & 22, 2002 to be held at the Carle Forum. The focus of the conference will be "Planning and the Public Participation".
- February 7, 2002 Plan Commission Meeting – will be cancelled due to lack of items.
- Status of Previous Plan Cases –
 1. City Council has tabled the rezoning of the five properties on Gregory Place to Campus Commercial District for two weeks to get more information about the East Campus Commercial Center project.
 2. City Council upheld the Plan Commission's recommendation to deny the request of the Zoning Administrator to amend the Zoning Ordinance with regards to Outdoor Advertising Sign Structures.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Kowalski, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission