

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: May 8, 2008

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Urbana City Building
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tyler Fitch, Ben Grosser, Lew Hopkins, Michael Pollock, Bernadine Stake, Marilyn Upah-Bant, James Ward, Don White

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Jane Burris

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Manager; Gale Jamison, Assistant City Engineer; Tony Weck, Community Development Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: There were none.

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 present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ward moved to approve the minutes from the April 24, 2008 meeting as presented. Mr. Grosser seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

- ◆ North Cunningham Neighborhood Business Meeting Invitation

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

11. STUDY SESSION

Presentation on the Draft Boneyard Creek Master Plan

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, opened the study session up by stating the purpose and intent of updating the Boneyard Creek Master Plan. The proposed plan is a way to rethink the role of Boneyard Creek in the community and to use it as an organizing principle for development, and for pedestrian connections within the City. The City of Urbana hired Wenk and Associates and HNTB in 2006 as consultants to aid the City in creating the plan.

Chair Pollock inquired if the Plan Commission would be requested from this presentation to take any action. What will be the process as the proposed draft plan moves through the stages of getting approved?

Mr. Myers answered that City staff is not asking the Plan Commission to endorse or approve the proposed draft plan. Staff plans to present the proposed plan to the City Council for adoption by resolution. It would not be a formal element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. But, because the current Boneyard Creek Plan, which was written in 1978, is referred to in several places in the Zoning Ordinance, City staff felt that it would only be fitting that the Plan Commission be aware of the proposed new plan which may come into play sometimes in terms of zoning.

Ms. Stake wondered if the proposed plan would change any zoning. Mr. Myers said no.

Mr. Myers turned the presentation over to Gale Jamison, Assistant City Engineer. Mr. Jamison stated that with a significant amount of planning effort done over the last few years, with updating the Downtown Plan and the Comprehensive Plan and with the advent of a lot of development in the downtown area, City staff felt it was time to update the Boneyard Creek

Master Plan. There have been many things change in the area since it was originally adopted in 1978.

He spoke about the planning process, which was to initially define the project scope and the parameters, define the technical design criteria for any improvements along the Boneyard Creek, identify the preferences for uses along the Creek, identify properties for preservation acquisition or redevelopment, and to identify key focus areas. It was a three step process, which included the following: 1) a visioning plan, which included an analysis and a lot of public input, 2) developing alternatives and refining the plan, and 3) to generating the plan. Creating the plan involved coming up with concepts through segments of the Boneyard Creek and its corridor. It developed into two phases, which are as such: 1) Near Term (0-5 Years) and 2) Long Term (5-25 Years).

He discussed the following:

- ◆ Project Area
- ◆ Framework Plan – Outcome of the Community Workshops – Goals
- ◆ Phase 1 Master Plan – Segments
- ◆ Segment 1

Chair Pollock asked if the City staff had looked at water capacity, so that the Boneyard Creek would hold as much water as it holds now. Mr. Jamison replied that HNTB worked to not increase any flood levels.

Chair Pollock wondered if anyone had looked into the maintenance costs of this project. Mr. Jamison said that they have some preliminary maintenance numbers but that they are still studying the costs estimates.

He continued his presentation by discussing the following:

- ◆ Segment 2
- ◆ Segment 3

Mr. Ward wondered that since they are creating quite a bit of pedestrian area below street grade level, did they consider public safety issues as well? Mr. Jamison responded that the street itself will have appropriate guard rails along the street. There will be lighting along the pathways. It will be fairly open.

He stated that this is just a concept, so they are a long ways from the design details. Their next step will be conceptual design, where they would address the public safety issue.

- ◆ Segment 4
- ◆ Segment 5
- ◆ Implementation and Next Steps

Chair Pollock wondered if the Boneyard Creek extends through one or both of the Downtown TIF (Tax Increment Financing) Districts. Mr. Jamison said that the Creek extends through both of them.

Chair Pollock asked what the sunset on those TIF Districts was. Would they be in place long enough to fund some of the proposed improvements, because this will require some long term development? Mr. Myers answered that to his recollection, TIF District No. 1 expires about 2013. TIF District No. 2 expires after 2020. Mr. Jamison noted that the City has funds in the annual Capital Improvement Plan and in the TIF Districts for some of these projects.

Chair Pollock stated that he was just wondering that if the TIF Districts expire, then how would the City publicly fund this project. Mr. Jamison replied that this is part of the deliberations and prioritization once they do the development plans and get more fine tuned cost estimates.

Ms. Stake commented that she is pleased to hear that the City is thinking about what we can do with the Boneyard Creek. Mr. Jamison mentioned that the Plan has some really good ideas, and he encouraged Commissioners to read the full Plan. There are a lot of details not in the Plan which would have to be negotiated with property owners over the next few years.

Mr. Hopkins asked what is imagined for the Lincoln Avenue to Main Street segment of Boneyard Creek. Mr. Jamison stated that this area is outside the study's scope. There are some parts of the proposed plan that could be extrapolated into that stretch. There are different constraints along there. There are some encroachments over the channel, which makes things difficult. All of it is private property across the channel. Some of the same concepts that are in the proposed plan could be carried back towards the stretch from Lincoln Avenue to Main Street, but they did not study this area in detail.

Mr. Hopkins recalled that there are large areas of the stretch that are covered, correct? Mr. Jamison said yes. There is an area near the Phillips Recreation Center that is covered, and there is an area just east of Lincoln Avenue that is covered by a parking deck. The stretch by Piccadilly is covered for about 200 feet as well. However, the majority of it is not covered except for the streets.

Mr. Hopkins wondered if the proposals in the plan relied or not on anything happening to the rest of the Boneyard Creek. Mr. Jamison replied that to get to the upstream end of what they are planning, one could use the streets. The Urbana Bicycle Master Plan has some on-street bike lanes that would connect to the plans for the Boneyard Creek. Chair Pollock added that if one wants to get an idea of what this could look like, then they could look at the University of Illinois Campus, where they have sculpted the area between Wright Street and Lincoln Avenue. Mr. Hopkins stated that he was thinking about the continuation of that into Urbana.

Mr. Jamison pointed out that the difficulty is that they are not likely to be able to do much with the channel as far as taking back the sheet piling walls through most of that stretch, because they are dealing with residential backyards and apartment buildings that are built right up to the easement. Many of the residents during the public hearings have expressed their need for privacy. They do not necessarily want people walking up and down in their backyards, which is

understandable. So, there are a lot of different issues in that stretch than there were in the stretch through downtown Urbana, where it is a little more open and there is more access to it.

Mr. Hopkins questioned if the two major excavations are also flood designed areas. Mr. Jamison answered by saying that they will provide additional conveyance and storage in that area. They are not designed to take any particular advantage in that stretch of the Boneyard. If you take a look at the recent flooding we had, it is all impacted by the water from the Saline Drainage Ditch, when it is up. If the Boneyard is the cause of the flooding, then it means there are restrictions downstream that are the impact, so we can provide more and store water, which in affect lower the levels, but that is not part of the detail concept of the Boneyard Creek Master Plan. There is not much to be gained in terms of flooding, but the Boneyard Creek Plan will help. It was not designed for flood control. The Plan was designed to improve the area and to provide gathering places and amenities along the Boneyard Creek.

Mr. Myers asked Mr. Jamison to briefly speak about what is going on with flood control of the Boneyard Creek in Champaign. Mr. Jamison explained that the City of Champaign made a large excavation by Second Street as a detention area for the Boneyard and the west channel of the Boneyard Creek. This protection did not provide the total level of protection for downstream that they wanted, so as a condition for approval the City of Urbana asked that there be a restrictor at Wright Street, which basically restricted the flow at Lincoln Avenue to what it was before. This way Urbana won't get any increased impact of the development of campus and of the City of Champaign. The University of Illinois developed detention just to the south of Grange Library for their impact. Now, The City of Champaign is adding detention along Second Street, south of University Avenue, so they are getting closer and closer to providing the protection that they would like to provide to everyone downstream.

Mr. Jamison noted that the City of Urbana has contracted with the United States Geological Survey to remap the Boneyard Creek for a flood perspective. The City has submitted the data to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Basically, the effect they saw with the remapping is not necessarily a lowering of the flood level, but changing the flood limits, because they have more accurate survey data now than when they did the original mapping.

Ms. Upah-Bant remembered the last time the Boneyard Creek Master Plan was created. She recalled that it was mostly citizen driven, and there were grand ideas about the river walk. What kind of development would ideally be sought out to build or redevelop near the proposed paths? Mr. Jamison thought that it might be a mixed use type of development, where there might be commercial or restaurants that would overlook the channel once it is improved and more visually appealing.

Ms. Upah-Bant questioned if these businesses would have to maintain the setback requirements, correct? Mr. Jamison said yes. They would have to build within the constraints of the City's maintenance easement. We could allow them to use the easement much like we do with sidewalk cafes now.

Mr. Myers commented that the consultants early on provided three different scenarios. One was basically to work within the existing corridor. The second scenario was to be a little more visionary and provide development nodes along the corridor which include more than just along

the banks themselves. The third scenario was the most ambitious of the three. It had envisioned redeveloping the entire corridor far back from the banks themselves. The input received from property owners, residents, and stakeholders was to pursue the middle course. Instead of creating a vision that might be considered unrealistic in the future, it is more grounded.

One important aspect of the Plan is that it is a vision for revitalization but not a really detailed plan. It does not pretend to provide all the answers about exactly how it will all work in the end. For instance, detailed engineering studies would still be needed. This provides the framework for what we would like to achieve. The exact location of pedestrian paths, for instance, will depend on what already exists there, impediments, and possible opportunities.

Ms. Stake said that at one time there was an idea that the City would have a train go from Urbana to Champaign. Mr. Jamison pointed out that there was a lot of public input, and they met with every property owner along the Boneyard stretch to get their input as well. City staff has tried to incorporate this input into the proposed Plan.

Mr. Grosser wondered to what degree City staff and the consultants feel that we need new redevelopment projects to make some of these ideas happen. Does the City want to wait until a property owner can do a project? Mr. Jamison stated that they feel they should get started on one of the segments fairly quickly. Segment 3 is the least development driven. The City has been looking at Segment 1 and how it could be redeveloped. If some of the property owners along Segment 1 came in with plans to redevelop along there, then they would begin with Segment 1. They feel that if they start making improvements along some of the segments, then it might stimulate redevelopment along the other segments.

With no further questions or comments at this time, Mr. Jamison stated that the Commission members could email or call him if any questions, concerns or suggestions for improvements come up in the future about this project.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP
Secretary, Urbana Plan Commission