

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: April 8, 2010

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Burris, Andrew Fell, Tyler Fitch, Ben Grosser, Lew Hopkins, Dannie Otto, Bernadine Stake

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Michael Pollock, Marilyn Upah-Bant

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Manager; Lisa Karcher, Planner II; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Selwyn Andrews, Kyra Bando, Rita Black, Louisa Boron, Richard Chung, Matt Cleeton, Jacob Cullinan, Chris Fahey, Brad Fine, Irwing Gama, Eric Halvorsen, Doug Johnson, Katie Keller, Nakhyun Kim, Yongjin Kim, Kevin McGuinness, Sergio Mendoza, Elizabeth Opholt, Mike Reu, Andrew Rohan, Marcela Said, Joseph Salas, Susan Taylor, Bradley Thomas, Patrick Tobin

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m., the roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

Mr. Fitch moved that Mr. Grosser serve as Acting Chairperson in the absence of Michael Pollock. Ms. Stake seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Otto moved to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2010 regular meeting as presented. Ms. Stake seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Plan Case No. 2124-PR-10: Review and Formal Acceptance of the University Avenue Corridor Study

Lisa Karcher, Planner II, presented this case to the Plan Commission. She began with a brief description of the University Avenue corridor. She explained the impetus for the University Avenue Corridor Study. She asked that the Plan Commission review the document, offer any comments on the study and forward a recommendation to the Urbana City Council for approval or adoption of the study. She introduced Eric Halvorsen from the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission.

With no questions from the Plan Commission for City staff at this time, Acting Chair Grosser opened the public input portion of the hearing.

Mr. Halvorsen approached the Plan Commission and gave a presentation on the following:

- Study Purpose and Steering Committee Members
 - Study Purpose
 - Study Steering Committee
- Study Area
- Existing Conditions Analysis
 - Major Findings From Existing Condition Report
- Vision and Study Goals
- Connected Nodes and Villages
 - Node Locations
 - Village Locations
- Recommendations
 - Future Land Use
 - Zoning Changes
 - Existing Density

- Envisioned Density
- Urban Form Characteristics
- Building Orientation
- Parking Orientation
- Signage
- Low Impact Design
- Streetscape Concepts – Wright Street to Maple Street
- Recommendations for Nodes and Transit Stops
- Transportation Improvements – Roadways and Intersections
 - Focus on Operational Improvements, not Capacity
 - Access Management
 - Landscape Medians
 - Intersection Improvements
- Bicycle Improvements
- Pedestrian Improvements
- Transit Improvements
- Development Incentives
 - Fiscal Incentives
 - Regulatory Incentives
- Urban Design Plan
- Implementation Plan
- Where are We Now?
- Questions

Ms. Stake wondered why members of the community who live in the corridor were not part of the stakeholders involved in the planning process. Mr. Halvorsen replied that although they did not include business or property owners on the steering committee itself, the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) did hold two public outreach meetings. One was a public workshop to introduce the study and to ask the public to provide initial input. Once CCRPC staff formulated the recommendations that are being presented, they held a second informational meeting for additional public input. Formal mailings for all of the public outreach efforts were made to all property and business owners in the entire corridor. CCRPC staff also placed ads in the local newspapers, on the County's website, and on TV as well. They tried hard to get the word out.

Ms. Stake understands that there are some people who are very afraid of what is going to happen to where they are living. Does the study plan for any residential to be changed? Mr. Halvorsen said no. Most of the residential is to the south and to the north. To the south, it is mostly multiple-family residential, and to the north, it is mostly single-family homes. CCRPC is not recommending any major changes to the residential properties.

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, referred to Page 61 of the study (Exhibit C in the written staff report). He said that the circles represent the parcels where the Study recommends changes in future land use designations. There is very little in either Urbana or Champaign that would change in terms of future land use designations. There is one parcel in Urbana that they are proposing to change the land use. This parcel is located on the Carle Hospital campus and has already been developed. What she is hearing is either unfounded or misinformation.

Mr. Halvorsen pointed out that there is one parcel along the west side of Wright Street (in Champaign) that is currently a parking lot being used by Provena. It is currently shown as single-family residential on the Land Use Map. Since it is owned by Provena and being used by Provena, it makes sense to change the zoning to be more consistent with its current use of a parking lot for an institution.

Ms. Stake asked for a description of a “village.” Mr. Halvorsen answered that it is not a “village” in the traditional sense, such as with the Village of Savoy. CCRPC staff uses the term “village” as a creative way to divide the corridor into smaller segments. The corridor is about two-and-a-half miles, and there are many jurisdictions responsible in those two-and-a-half miles. By breaking the corridor down into “villages”, it is a way for them to key in on some of the main concepts that they want to enhance.

Mr. Fell wondered if CCRPC staff had conversed with officials that are charged with implementing the University Streetscape District about how successful they think it has been. He believes that the owners of the lots where the University Streetscape system is enforced did not have to pay for the improvements. However, property owners on the periphery and the building owners themselves are charged with making those improvements. So he is interested in CCRPC’s recommendation for how the proposed improvements get paid for. Are owners of the land going to be charged with replacing sidewalks, benches, etc.?

Mr. Halvorsen replied that he did not know where the University Streetscape system extends to in terms of the University Avenue Corridor. Mr. Fell stated that it is a similar concept. Mr. Halvorsen explained that when speaking with City of Urbana staff, they envisioned more of a public/private partnership between developers or property owners and the City where the City of Urbana is willing to go in and make some of the improvements if the property owner is willing to contribute to part of the streetscape improvements. Ms. Karcher added that the proposed University Avenue Corridor Study would be used similar to the Philo Road Action Plan in that it would be a guiding document as developments would come in along University Avenue to show the developers what the City is looking for in terms of streetscape.

Mr. Fell stated that one flaw in the University Streetscape system is that in the periphery of the district they put the burden on the property owner to make the improvements that the University dictates. For example, part of the streetscape requirement is that there must be a colored sidewalk. So there may be a block where every other person has made an improvement and the sidewalk looks terrible. The new sidewalks look great and the old sidewalks look terrible. This is a very haphazard sort of arrangement.

Ms. Karcher commented that this is something we face in having to put these plans in place when the City does not have the funding to do so. Because of the nature and size of the University Avenue Corridor and the funding it would take to complete the recommended improvements, improvements will probably happen in segments. The City can pursue grants and provide some funds in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), but still the improvements will have to occur in segments.

Mr. Otto appreciates the efforts the City staff is making in the study to provide for bike access. He recalled that in his presentation Mr. Halvorsen talked about altering the car parking

requirements as an inducement to get people to move parking off the front to the sideways. So there are ways of requiring property owners to provide car parking, but no one even in new buildings is providing bike parking. Is there any consideration in the study to provide for bike parking that is visible and accessible to the entrance of the business so people do not use parking meters and trees to tie their bikes up to? For instance when he goes to Carle Hospital he can't find places to chain his bicycle and sees other bikes chained to light poles there. And this is a new building. And he does not see bicycle parking at the new building on the southwest corner of Lincoln and University Avenues.

Ms. Karcher said that the Urbana Zoning Ordinance now has regulations that require new developments to provide bike parking. However, for existing buildings, the City needs to find ways to encourage retrofitting with bike parking.

Mr. Otto stated that he would like to see bike parking addressed in the proposed study so that people know it is a priority.

Mr. Myers noted that the City does not issue a final Certificate of Occupancy until required bike parking has been installed. There have been times when the City has issued a temporary Certificate of Occupancy so the business can open their doors, but then the business must still install bike parking in order to come into compliance. If anyone such as Mr. Otto finds a new development that does not have bike parking available, they are welcome to report this to City staff for follow up. Mr. Otto said he was pleased to hear this.

Mr. Otto talked about coordinating lights to improve traffic flow and reducing access points. What do the small shop owners and businesses think about the improved traffic flow? These improvements make it so drivers can breeze right through without having to stop and notice their business. There are conflicting interests in that they want to create villages, which means stop and spend a dollar and at the same time make improvements to improve traffic flow. How does CCRPC staff calculate this? Mr. Halvorsen stated that they typically look at vehicular traffic along a roadway, and the worst condition is the peak hour. The recommendations for signal coordination and retiming are actually targeted toward easing congestion during the peak hours when people are the most frustrated going to and from work. He agrees that small shop owners probably do want the traffic to slow down and stop.

One of the biggest concepts with the "node" would be that there would be an area with somewhat higher intensity development, possibly with uses like an anchor or local restaurant or a specialty boutique. Although there are competing interests he believes the attractiveness of the nodes and future developments along the corridor would help all the businesses (existing and new).

Mr. Karcher mentioned that the plan recognizes that connecting parking lots is part of access management. Even though they are providing for the traffic to flow along University Avenue, they are also providing ways to get in and making it inviting. An information kiosk and way finding signs would be put in to help direct people within the district.

Mr. Otto inquired about the intersection at Broadway and University Avenues as to making plans to encourage pedestrian traffic between Downtown Urbana and Crystal Lake Park. Ms. Karcher

stated that this was addressed in the proposed study. On Page 74, there is an illustration to show recommended improvements to this specific intersection to increase pedestrian access. This intersection is currently difficult to cross so CCRPC and City staff feels that installing a kiosk and wayfinding signs would improve one of the important connections to the City's downtown area. She mentioned that City staff has just begun working on a new downtown plan. They may very well be looking at how this connection brings people into the downtown area.

Mr. Myers added that Broadway Avenue streetscape improvements are already scheduled for construction through the CIP which would be funded through the tax increment finance (TIF) funds. The recommended improvements shown in the University Avenue Corridor Study will help pedestrians such as the islands at Broadway and University. Mr. Halvorsen pointed out that there are currently channelized islands for pedestrians at Broadway and University, but they are all concrete. The plan is recommending to enhance them for pedestrians and also so that drivers are aware of pedestrian zones.

Mr. Otto commented that there are a lot to like about the plan. One of the real strengths for him is to try and break up some of the parking lots that form a broad face there. If they can get the buildings closer to the street and the parking lots to the side and behind the buildings then it would be a huge improvement visually.

Mr. Fitch noticed that there are two recommendations in the proposed study to rezoning two lots from residential to business use. The Implementation Plan shows that both rezoning recommendations fall in the 5 to 15 year timeframe. Would City staff be considering coming back to the Plan Commission and to the Urbana City Council to make these requests?

Ms. Karcher explained that these are essentially just recommendations. It is not the City's intention to go in and rezone the properties until there is a development request. One of the residential rezoning that is recommended is owned by the University of Illinois and is used as a parking lot so it is not appropriately zoned as R-5, Medium-High Density Multiple-Family Residential. So for the vision of the study it would make sense to rezone this property to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Fitch expressed concern about the plan stating that the City should grant regulatory easements or variances. He asked if the study was telling people that if they propose new business development along University Avenue, then the City would give them a variance. Ms. Karcher suggested not using the word "variance." It is not the City's intention to encourage people to apply for variances. We could create overlay districts, where the City could recognize that there are certain conditions and create regulations for how the City wants the area to develop. Mr. Fitch felt this could be helpful.

Ms. Karcher stated that the proposed study is simply a framework with suggestions and recommendations. Once this study is adopted, if City staff decides to change development regulations then any changes would come back to the Plan Commission as a text amendment or some type of plan case.

Mr. Hopkins pointed out a discrepancy in that on the agenda, the action is to accept the proposed study and in the written staff report, the action is to approve the study. And Ms. Karcher just

referred to the action as adopting the study. Accepting, approving and adopting are not the same thing.

Ms. Karcher responded that City staff is requesting that the Plan Commission treat it as a policy review. The intention is to have the Urbana City Council adopt the proposed study as a guide for future development. It will not actually be an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan but will be a planning document. City staff recommends that the Plan Commission make a recommendation to the Urbana City Council for adoption.

Ms. Stake wondered if CCRPC staff sent notices to tenants living in rental units. Mr. Halvorsen clarified that they compiled a list of all addresses in the corridor. They then sent notices to all property and business owners. If there is a residential address, whether it was an apartment or a single-family home or other, the tenant would have received a notice as part of the mailing. They sent the mailings out about two weeks prior to the public meeting. In addition, he noted that the City staff also sent out flyers prior to the 30-day comment period notifying every residence, business owner, and property owner in the corridor about the 30-day comment period.

Ms. Stake expressed her concern about there not being a person who lives in the area serving on the steering committee. People who worked on the project were paid to work on it. Ms. Karcher replied that there were 28 participants who attended the November, 2008 workshop and 55 participants who attended the June, 2009 meeting. There were notices on Urbana Public Television and in the local newspaper, notices for the 30-day comment period were sent out to all the addresses in the area outlining what was happening, and the information has always been on the Champaign County website throughout the entire process.

With no further comments or questions from the audience, Acting Chairperson Grosser closed the public hearing. He then opened the meeting to Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Ms. Burris asked City staff to respond to Mr. Hopkins' comment about accepting, approving or adopting the proposed study and how each would impact the City. Ms. Karcher stated that City staff considers this a plan, so it was City staff's goal to have the Plan Commission review it, offer comments and offer a recommendation for adoption to the City Council. CCRPC staff will be presenting the plan to the Urbana Committee of the Whole on Monday, April 12 and City staff will ask the City Council to take action on Monday, April 19 by adopting the plan.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he would be reluctant to recommend adoption to the City Council. "Approval" could be interpreted as adoption so he is reluctant to this as well. The reason is that the proposed study specifically recommends rezoning the southeast corner of University and Lincoln Avenues. This specifically recommends that the City act to rezone in response to a proposal. He is not willing to have this in an adopted plan for two reasons: first, it is not what a rezoning is; and second, there was a specific case before the Plan Commission a few years ago, and the Plan Commission rejected it in part because a rezoning cannot be a rezoning contingent upon a particular proposal. So having this specific recommendation in the study is unacceptable to him as part of a formal plan.

On the other hand if the Plan Commission is being asked to “accept” a study then he would be in favor of it. By accepting a study that is completed by a consultant such as CCRPC the City is saying that the consultants have completed their assigned task and should get paid. The City can then take the study and use what they deem appropriate. However, acceptance would not give it the legal status or the implied backing that an adopted plan would have.

If City staff wants to use the proposed study as a plan, then there is significant work to be done on the document. Some examples of other work that needs to be done include more visual examples like bike parking. There is already a Broadway Avenue Corridor concept in the existing Downtown Plan. The existing concept should be explicitly acknowledged in the proposed plan and either say that the concepts discussed and visually shown in the proposed plan links to those in the existing Downtown Plan or that the proposed plan revises the concepts and plans in the existing Downtown Plan.

This is why it matters to him what the Plan Commission is suppose to be doing. Are they accepting a consultant’s study report? Or are they adopting a policy for the City? To be honest, he has not read the whole document all the way through word-for-word and would like an opportunity to do so before making any changes in order to be able to adopt it.

Mr. Myers clarified that the adopted Comprehensive Plan does designate the future land use at southeast corner of Lincoln and University Avenues as “Community Business.” The parcels in the proposed study that are being recommended for rezoning would be in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Hopkins agreed, but that is not the issue. The statement in the proposed document about what should be done claims to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan but instead is consistent with a specific development proposal. The City should not make a rezoning decision contingent upon a proposal, and we shouldn’t be making a recommendation about a rezoning claimed to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan that we have actually already rejected.

Mr. Myers said that the proposed study is not suggesting that this particular area be rezoned contingent upon a particular proposal. Mr. Hopkins disagreed. This is exactly what the proposed study says.

Ms. Stake believes that the proposed plan allows too much. They have not studied it enough to know if the City really wants to do all the things that are being recommended. If they go ahead and adopt the proposed plan then those things would be allowed to be done.

Mr. Myers pointed out that with regards to bike parking, there are illustrations in the Zoning Ordinance showing proper types of bike parking. Mr. Hopkins stated that to him the proposed document is a study. If City staff is comfortable with calling it a study, then he is comfortable “accepting” it as a study. However, in the form of a study, it is trying to communicate to people how the City imagines doing things in this corridor, and it does not talk about bike parking.

Ms. Stake commented that the maps are difficult to read as they are too small.

Mr. Grosser asked that if the Plan Commission decides to “accept” the proposed study rather than “adopt” it as a plan will this create problems? Rita Black, CCRPC, answered that there is

no requirement in the grant that the City has to “adopt” it. The only requirement from the grant is that they need to return a final document to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) before July 1 that has been approved by the City. Mr. Grosser questioned whether a formal acceptance would suffice. Ms. Black said yes.

Ms. Burris pointed out that CCRPC was contracted to do a study and the City has turned the study into a plan. She suggested that the Plan Commission goes back to what CCRPC was contracted to do and just look at it as a study. A plan can be created out of the study at a later time.

Mr. Grosser agrees with Mr. Hopkins and Ms. Burris. He believes that “acceptance” makes more sense. It is great to serve as a guide for what the City will do next. If the proposed document was to be “adopted” as policy, then he would want to read it more thoroughly and discuss all the points. He feels that the particular designs in the study are maybe too much the same. He would want to see it go to the Urbana Public Arts Commission for review and to create a Request for Proposal (RFP) for artists to look at designing something that would fit along the corridor.

Mr. Fitch felt that it needed some changes even if they only accept it. He is not comfortable with announcing that the City is going to ease the regulatory.

Mr. Otto wondered if it would pose a problem to table this until the next meeting to allow the Plan Commission more time to read and come up with changes. Ms. Black said that would be fine with CCRPC. Ms. Karcher explained the new timeline should this agenda item be tabled until the April 22 meeting. Mr. Otto then realized that the next meeting falls during Ebert Fest and wondered if this might cause a problem for reaching a quorum.

Ms. Stake commented that “accepting” the proposed document as a study would be much easier than “adopting” it. She wanted to discuss the document page-by-page.

Ms. Karcher asked for clarification about continuing the meeting. If the Plan Commission is looking at accepting the proposed document as a study, would they still want more time to be able to make comments? Or are there specific comments that they can make now and still accept it during this meeting?

Ms. Burris commented that she would feel comfortable accepting it as a study during this meeting. Mr. Otto asked if the Plan Commission made a recommendation to City Council to accept the proposed document, then would they get another chance to do more work on the study and then adopt it at a later time? Or if they accept it would they simply be finished? Ms. Karcher responded that if they accept it as a study, then it would be considered as a study and any recommendations that come out of it would be specific plan cases and would be brought before the Plan Commission and City Council for approval. It wouldn't be that they would revisit this specific document and adopt it.

Mr. Myers added that the contract with CCRPC is only through a certain period of time so after July 1 any work by CCRPC would be outside the scope of this particular grant.

Mr. Grosser stated that he is happy to accept it at this meeting. A motion to accept could include specific comments that the Plan Commission members want to make.

Mr. Otto said he was still learning the vocabulary and terminology. He appreciated Ms. Karcher's explanation and feels more comfortable knowing that any rezoning of property would be assigned a plan case and presented to the Plan Commission and City Council. Therefore, he would be willing to accept the study during this meeting.

Mr. Fitch moved that the Plan Commission accept Plan Case No. 2124-PR-10 with removal of specific references to rezoning of properties and removal of specific non-fiscal development incentives noted on page 82.

Mr. Hopkins recommended that they clean up the motion. The motion needs to be that the Plan Commission recommends to the City Council to accept the proposed study subject to the following revisions: 1) remove the recommendation to rezone the southeast intersection of University and Lincoln Avenues and 2) that proposals for bicycle parking be explicitly included.

Mr. Fitch stated that the things he would make reference to are as such: 1) all specific rezoning recommendations be removed (#1 and #2 on Page 62); 2) strike "Waivers of requirements to elements in the zoning ordinance and/or development regulations or an expedited planning process could be implemented for redevelopment along the corridor."; and 3) strike Reduced Setback and Density Restrictions paragraph and Reduced Parking Standards paragraph (Page 82) from the document.

Ms. Karcher explained that it may be the way it is worded. When City staff looked at this section, they did not think of it as being variances. They thought of it as being the creation of an overlay district that would put certain standards in place appropriate for that district.

Mr. Grosser stated that he would like to add the following to the list of revisions: design elements for unification should be sent to the Public Arts Commission for design as opposed to using what is shown in the proposed study.

Ms. Karcher commented that typically the Public Arts Commission does not review all of the streetscape elements. It might be better to say that the proposed study is a guideline which contains recommendations for improvements and final designs will be approved by the City.

Mr. Hopkins believed that they should be highlighting items and not trying to rewrite the study in real time. The design examples should not be taken as explicit design recommendations. Saying that the design elements should be sent to the Public Arts Commission is a policy decision which implies changing the way all streetscape improvements are reviewed and approved by the City.

Mr. Otto commented that public art is one thing and streetscapes and walls are another thing. Artists do not need to think much about traffic flow and visual things when they are creating public art, which is in a designated space and has one function. Fences, streetscapes and walls are not examples of public art.

Mr. Otto suggested having a clean motion and having members make amendments to the motion for each revision. Mr. Grosser stated that they are almost finished with making revisions and that they should not start over.

Mr. Grosser altered his revision to say the following: the design elements in the study should not be considered as a specific proposal.

Acting Chairperson Grosser restated the motion including the revisions, which is as follows: that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2124-PR-10 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation to accept as a study and subject to the following four revisions:

- 1) Remove recommendations on page 62 to rezone parcels in Urbana;
- 2) Explicitly discuss proposals for bicycle parking;
- 3) Remove the following recommendations on page 82 ~~for expedited approval process and reduced setback and density restrictions~~ under Non-Fiscal Development Incentives:
 - a) “Waiver of requirements to elements in the Zoning Ordinance and/or development regulations”
 - b) The bullet points labeled “Reduced Setback and Density Restrictions” and “Reduced Parking Standards”; and
- 4) Clarify that design examples shown in the study for streetscape elements should not be taken as specific proposals.

Mr. Otto seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Ms. Stake	-	Yes	Mr. Otto	-	Yes
Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes	Mr. Grosser	-	Yes
Mr. Fitch	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes
Ms. Burris	-	Yes			

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Acting Chairperson Grosser reminded everyone who might be watching the Plan Commission meeting at home that the public comment period is open until April 19, 2010. CCRPC staff will give a presentation to the Committee of the Whole on Monday, April 12, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Myers reported on the following:

- + Annual Review of the Official Zoning Map was approved by City Council.
- + Champaign County Wind Farm Text Amendments – City Council voted to uphold the Plan Commission’s recommendation to defeat a resolution of protest.

- ✚ Next scheduled Plan Commission Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 6. There is a subdivision waiver request by Wisley Inn coming before the Plan Commission for approval. With the Ebert Fest occurring, she wondered how many of the Plan Commission members would be able to attend the meeting. She stated that she would have the Planning Secretary send an email to the Plan Commission members requesting this information. Mr. Myers described the location for the Wisley Inn request.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission