



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor

FROM: Elizabeth H. Tyler, AICP, Director, Community Development Services

DATE: July 19, 2007

SUBJECT: Plan Case No. 2023-T-06: Request by the Zoning Administrator to amend the Urbana Zoning Ordinance by adding Section XIII-5, "Neighborhood Conservation Districts."

Please find attached a draft of a proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendment for neighborhood conservation districts. If enacted, this ordinance would establish a process for property owners and neighborhood groups to initiate zoning overlay districts for protection of neighborhood character. As part of the process, a neighborhood plan would be adopted which would provide policies for neighborhood protection which would be customized to the needs of each particular area. In conformance with the plan, enactment of design guidelines and/or other zoning measures (such as different parking standards) are envisioned. This proposed ordinance would not in itself designate any properties or neighborhoods. The City Council would have final determination over any neighborhood conservation district.

The following Zoning Ordinance text amendment was most recently reviewed at the June 25, 2007 Committee of the Whole meeting. Since then, City staff has incorporated the following changes suggested at that meeting.

- Clarified that any design guidelines can include elements other than those listed;
- Included screening and landscaping as a possible element of design guidelines;
- Clarified the wording concerning the percentage of property owners responding with registered preference forms;
- Clarified the wording for protest procedures; and
- Added a requirement for notification following the final determination of the City Council;

In the attached document underlining indicates text added and ~~strikeouts~~ indicate text deleted since the draft reviewed by the City Council on June 25th.

Because there was not a clear consensus expressed at the meeting on the property owner approval provision, no changes have been made in this respect. The alternatives mentioned are to have a minimum of 60%, 55%, or 51% approval of the property owners who respond, or alternatively if 60% of responding property owners do not approve of the proposed ordinance the City Council could still pass a proposed neighborhood conservation district but only by a two-thirds majority.

City staff requests that the Committee of the Whole review the proposed neighborhood conservation district Zoning Ordinance text amendment and determine whether further changes are necessary. As with any Zoning Ordinance amendment, this will need to be referred to the City Council for final action.

Prepared by:

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Attachments:

Neighborhood Conservation District text amendment, July 19, 2007

cc:

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Urbana Plan Commissioners
Urbana Historic Preservation Commissioners

Section XIII-5. Neighborhood Conservation Districts

A. Purpose. The purposes of establishing a neighborhood conservation district are to:

1. Conserve the unique characteristics, including architectural, historical and aesthetic qualities, of older neighborhoods;
2. Provide for design review of new construction and alteration of existing buildings to ensure compatibility with the existing character of the district;
3. Encourage the retention and rehabilitation of existing structures in older neighborhoods;
4. Encourage reinvestment in older neighborhoods; and
5. Protect the setting and context of historic landmarks and historic districts in close proximity to or surrounded by neighborhood conservation districts.

B. Definitions.

Conservation District Design Guidelines: A document identifying significant physical design features within a defined Neighborhood Conservation District as well as design guidelines for future physical improvements within the district.

Neighborhood Conservation District: An area designated pursuant to procedures prescribed herein which contains, within defined geographic boundaries, buildings, structures, sites or objects with unifying qualities or characteristics which are to be conserved.

Parcel Owner: An owner of record of a parcel, or, if the parcel is being purchased under a contract for deed and memorandum of such contract has been recorded with the Champaign County Recorder, then the contract buyer shall be regarded as the parcel owner unless the memorandum that is recorded states that the rights under this ordinance are reserved to the contract seller.

Secretary: The Secretary of the Plan Commission, or designee.

C. Minimum eligibility requirements. The minimum eligibility requirements for nomination of neighborhood conservation districts are:

1. The proposed district shall consist of a minimum of twenty-five adjoining zoning lots which for the purposes of this Section may be separated by a street right-of-way wider than 28 feet;
2. The proposed district boundaries shall designate a logical, coherent, and cohesive district in terms of the physical location of properties in relation to one another; and
4. The proposed district shall be predominately residential in use or character.

D. Neighborhood Conservation District Applications. Applications shall be made by means of a completed application form provided by the City and may be initiated by either a minimum of 15% of the parcel owners to be included in the proposed district or by a neighborhood organization.

The Plan Commission Secretary shall have five working days to determine whether or not an application is complete. Applications shall minimally include:

1. The name and address of the owner of record of each property proposed for designation;
2. A boundary description accurately describing the boundaries of the proposed district, common

- street addresses, if any, and tax parcel identification numbers of the property proposed for designation;
3. A map delineating the boundaries and location of the district proposed for designation;
 4. A written statement describing the district and specifying the reasons the district needs to be conserved;
 5. A statement and description of the desired outcome of the designation, including any expectations for conservation district design guidelines; and
 6. Any required filing fee.
- E. Application Notice. Upon receipt of a complete application for designation of a neighborhood conservation district, the Secretary shall notify parcel owners within the proposed district of the time and date of the Plan Commission meeting where preliminary review of the application will occur. Notification shall include a copy of the application or relevant portions thereof for the property owners' information. Additionally, the City of Urbana will make a good faith effort to post signs within the proposed district notifying the public of the preliminary determination hearing.
- F. Preliminary Determination.
1. The Urbana Plan Commission shall make a determination as to whether or not the proposed district has a cohesive and identifiable visual setting, character or association:
 - a) Representing the traditional character of Urbana neighborhoods through architecture; building scale, massing, setbacks, and orientation; or streetscape design;
 - b) Exemplifying a neighborhood development pattern significant to the cultural history or tradition of Urbana; or
 - c) Containing an identified unique or unusual physical character that creates distinctiveness.
 2. Within sixty days of receiving the application, the Plan Commission shall make a preliminary determination as to whether a proposed neighborhood conservation district meets one or more of the criteria in Section XIII-5.F. The Secretary shall notify the applicant in writing of the preliminary determination for the nomination, specifying the date of said determination.
 3. Additionally, the Secretary shall forward the application to the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission for review. The Historic Preservation Commission may find that the proposed district appears to qualify for designation as a local historic district, in which case the applicants may choose to withdraw their application and apply for historic district designation under Section XII-4 of the Zoning Ordinance or continue with the neighborhood conservation district application.
- G. Conservation District Design Guidelines. Following the preliminary determination, the City, in consultation with district property owners and residents, may prepare design guidelines for the proposed district. Conservation district design guidelines should minimally include:
1. An inventory defining what is significant about the established character of the proposed neighborhood conservation district, including building characteristics such as established setbacks from property lines and patterns in height, massing, bulk, and orientation; patterns of parcel size and orientation; and streetscape elements.
 2. Defined boundaries of the neighborhood conservation district;

3. Proposed design guidelines prescribing future development within the district, which may include the following or other necessary elements:
 - a) Building size and massing;
 - b) Roofline and pitch;
 - c) Façade/elevation features, including orientation of doorways and window openings;
 - d) Porches;
 - e) Exterior materials; ~~and~~
 - f) Parking areas; and
 - g) Screening and landscaping.
 4. An outline of the proposed review process for future exterior changes and whether these changes are to be reviewed by a commission or board, City staff, or a combination thereof depending on levels of review.
- H. Notification of Public Hearing. The Secretary shall schedule a public hearing on the application and any design guidelines at the Plan Commission. The Secretary shall provide the following notice not less than ten days before a public hearing on the proposal:
1. Notice by Mail. The Secretary shall notify owners of all properties within the proposed district the date of the public hearing. Notification shall be sent by first-class U.S. mail to:
 - a) The address of the property affected;
 - b) The address of the person who last paid the general taxes on the affected property according to the records of the Champaign County Supervisor of Assessments;
 2. Notice by Publication. At least 15 days, but not more than 30 days before a public hearing, notice of the time and place of the public hearing on any proposed neighborhood conservation district shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the City of Urbana. The notice of such proposed hearing shall contain the common street addresses or address ranges, a description of the proposed district boundaries for which such action is sought, as well as a brief description of the proposed action.
 3. Notice by Sign. The Secretary shall make a good faith effort to post notice by sign in accordance with Section XI-10 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.
- J. Public Hearing of the Plan Commission. The Plan Commission shall hold a public hearing at which the Commission shall take testimony of the applicants, property owners, residents, and any others wishing to be heard on the application. In addition, the Plan Commission shall consider all written comments received prior to or during the hearing.
- K. Plan Commission Recommendation.
1. Within 60 days following the public hearing, the Plan Commission shall by majority vote recommend to the City Council whether to approve, approve with changes, or deny the application, including any design guidelines.
 2. The Plan Commission's recommendation shall be accompanied by findings and a report

summarizing the evidence presented at the hearing.

3. Within 15 days of the Plan Commission's recommendation, property owners in the proposed district shall be mailed a copy of the Plan Commission's recommendation and a registered preference form.
 4. The City shall provide owners of record thirty calendar days to submit a registered preference form in favor of or opposing designation of the neighborhood conservation district. Signatures of 60% or more of the responding owners of record ~~or more of owners of record responding in indicating they are in~~ favor of designation shall be required for approval. The determination as to endorsement of the owners of record shall be, if a sole owner, by his or her signature, and if multiple owners, by the signatures of owners representing no less than 50% of the title interest in the property. If the affected property is owned by a corporation or partnership, a signed resolution must be submitted indicating an endorsement. Each parcel is considered independently, regardless of single ownership of multiple parcels.
- L. The Secretary shall forward to the City Council the application, plan and design guidelines, Plan Commission recommendation, results of returned registered preference forms, enacting ordinance for the district, and an ordinance or resolution adopting any proposed design guidelines. Copies shall be sent to the applicants, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Urbana Building Safety Division.
- M. Protests Against Designation. Prior to commencement of the City Council meeting in which a vote on the proposed action is taken, owners of property within the proposed district may file an official protest against designation of the neighborhood conservation district. A protest shall be considered valid if written opposition is signed by the owners of at least 25% of the lots within the proposed district as follows:
1. If a sole owner, then protest shall be signed by the sole owner; or
 2. If multiple owners, then protest shall be signed by the owners representing the majority of the title interest in the property. By way of illustration, if four persons are joint owners of a parcel, it would take three of such joint owners to sign the protest for it to be valid.
 3. There shall be one registered preference per parcel in the proposed district ~~for each parcel within the proposed district~~. For example, if an owner owns four lots, each lot would have one vote.
- N. Final Determination.
1. The City Council shall by majority vote of a quorum either approve, approve with amendments, or deny both the proposed district and any design guidelines.
 2. In the case of a valid protest as specified in Section XIII-5.M, action on both the proposed district and any design guidelines shall not be authorized except by a favorable vote of two-thirds of the members of the City Council.
 3. No less than 15 days following the City Council's final determination, the City shall notify all owners of record in the district where a copy of the plan and any design guidelines may be reviewed.
 4. At its discretion, the Plan Commission may refuse to consider a request for a neighborhood conservation district if such request is identical to or substantially similar to a proposed district denied by the City Council within the past year.

- O. Amendment and Dissolution. The district boundaries of any adopted neighborhood conservation district may be amended by the same procedures and criteria as for designation. The City Council may amend any design guidelines enacted as part of the neighborhood conservation district following the notification requirements of Section XI-10 of the Zoning Ordinance. Neighborhood conservation districts may be dissolved by a two-thirds "affirmative" vote of the City Council members then holding office.