



APPROVED by CD Commission 11-25-08
MINUTES
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Tuesday, September 23, 2008, City Council Chambers
400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801

Call to Order: Chairperson Cobb called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Roll Call: Connie Eldridge called the roll. A quorum was present.

Commission Members Present: Fred Cobb, Janice Bengtson, Chris Diana, George Francis, Jerry Moreland, Brad Roof, Anne Heinze Silvis, Dennis Vidoni

Commission Members Absent: Theresa Michelson

Others Present: John Schneider and Connie Eldridge, Community Development Services; Anne Schilli, Developmental Services Center.

Approval of Minutes: *Chairperson Cobb asked for approval or corrections to the August 26, 2008 minutes. Referencing page 6, item 3, Commissioner Roof clarified that his concern was about the total cost of the acquiring the property (including demolition) relative to the appraised value of the property. Commissioner Bengtson moved to approve the minutes as clarified, and Commissioner Vidoni seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Petitions and Communications: None.

Staff Report: Mr. Schneider provided updates and distributed the following: a staff briefing memorandum dated September 23, 2008 and the Fall 2008 *Neighborhood News*. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has approved the City of Urbana's Amendment to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007-2008 Annual Action Plan (AAP). Grants Management Division staff is concentrating on HUD's Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). Community Development (CD) Commissioners may request either a paper or an electronic copy of the CAPER.

Commissioner Vidoni asked if City Council discussed the property purchase actions from last month that CD Commission recommended for approval. Mr. Schneider noted that Council received the unapproved minutes from the August 26, 2008 CD Commission meeting. Council's only question concerned the cost of the demolition (\$12,500) at 1302 West Dublin Street. Council passed all ordinances concerning property acquisition.

Old Business: Commissioner Roof wondered when a mortgage lender would discuss the City's first time homebuyer programs. Mr. Schneider answered that David Gillon, Busey Bank, was scheduled to attend the June CD Commission meeting, which was cancelled due to lack of a quorum. He will reschedule this. There have been 25 loans through *AssistUrbana* to date. However, there has been no recent report of activity in the Illinois Housing Development Association (IHDA) programs.

New Business: An Ordinance Approving an Amendment to a City of Urbana Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Agreement – Disabled Citizens Foundation – Developmental Services Center (DSC) Project No. 0708-AAP-02 – Mr. Schneider explained this was the final step in the process of approving this change. Because DSC could not secure additional financing due to other issues, they asked if the City of Urbana would reduce the scope of work. The CD Commission, City Council, and HUD approved this change, and now the actual agreement needs to be amended to reflect this change.

Chairperson Cobb asked if this reduced the amount of funds. Mr. Schneider answered that the City dedicated \$25,000 in CDBG funds to DSC's \$500,000 project. Because DSC could not secure funding to build the addition, they requested the CDBG funds be used for their roof project, which cost \$52,000 and leveraged \$27,000 of other project funding.

Commissioner Vidoni questioned the process. Mr. Schneider clarified that this amendment changed the original contract to read, "...CDBG funds to repair the roof of DSC's Clark Road vocational training site." The City of Urbana's Consolidated Plan (Con Plan) requires a substantial amendment process whenever the City changes funds or the scope of work by more than 10%. This requires advertisement of a 30 day comment period and a public hearing. There was discussion on whether the contract could be amended at the same time the CD Commission approved an amendment to the AAP. Mr. Schneider stated that the contract should not be changed until HUD approves the amendment. Commissioner Roof suggested including a "trigger" to approve the contract, pending approval by the City Council and HUD. City staff will look into this.

Commissioner Diana moved to recommend to City Council approval of an Ordinance Approving an Amendment to a City of Urbana Community Development Block Grant Program Agreement – Disabled Citizens Foundation – Developmental Services Center Project No. 0708-AAP-02. Commissioner Roof seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Request for Comment on the proposed Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan – Mr. Schneider introduced Jeff Engstrom, Planner I, and Robert Myers, Planning Division Manager. Mr. Engstrom stated the Urbana Zoning Administrator is requesting City Council adopt the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan as an amendment to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). This plan includes goals and strategies for the area surrounding Crystal Lake Park and will be the guiding document for policy and planning in that area. He reviewed the boundaries and noted it was similar to other neighborhood plans. The Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan does not recommend specific zoning map or future land use map changes but contains the general goals and policies that will justify such changes in the future.

The 30 day public review period for the Draft Plan began September 9, 2008, and a public hearing will be held at the Urbana Plan Commission meeting on October 9, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. in the Urbana City Building. The Plan Commission will make recommendations and forward the Plan to City Council.

Mr. Engstrom reviewed the planning process: Background Research Phase, Visioning Phase, Plan Concepts Phase, Draft Plan Preparation Phase, Final Plan Preparation Phase, and the Implementation Phase. Various commissioners provided comments, which will be included in information forwarded to Council with the Plan.

The heart of the plan includes Trends and Issues, Plan Concepts, and Goals and Objectives. Trends and Issues resulted from research and the public input process. It looks at the growth of Carle Hospital, aging housing stock, and changing commercial vitality along University Avenue. Key Plan Concepts are mapped in Exhibit A: Plan Concepts Map, which includes information from the Crystal Lake Master Plan recently developed by the Urbana Park District. The Goals and Objectives section lists 19 goals and several objectives derived from input gathered during the planning process.

Goals and Objectives are divided into four categories: Land Use and Development, Housing; Mobility, and Community Enhancement. Land Use and Development includes ensuring that the Carle Campus “grows up and not out.” Residents want more commercial areas developed. The Housing section includes goals and objectives taken from the Comprehensive Plan and the Consolidated Plan. It focuses on preserving affordable housing and one-for-one replacement. The Mobility section includes installing sidewalks in those areas without sidewalks. The last section, Community Enhancement, has three goals: capitalize on the neighborhood and its assets; promote a sense of community through neighborhood activities and community gathering spaces; and improve neighborhood safety and appearance.

Referencing page 47, objective 16.1, Commissioner Silvis mentioned past interest in a community center and asked if this was on the horizon. Mr. Engstrom said that some people at the workshop wanted a community center. However, this was not discussed with the Urbana School District. Mr. Schneider mentioned past efforts to develop a community center with the Urbana Park District and Urbana School District 116. One proposal was to connect the community center with King School and have it operated by the school or the Park District. The neighbors preferred a standalone facility. The proposed project died for lack of agreement on which way to proceed. Commissioner Diana remembered there were too many different potential uses, and not everyone was “on the same page.” Noting the neighborhood trends toward more teenagers, he suggested a teen center might be more appropriate. Commissioner Moreland remembered the concern was about which group would be responsible for operation of a standalone facility. Residents wanted the community center primarily for senior citizens to visit. Chairperson Cobb mentioned that Jettie Rhodes, former member of the CD Commission, was the person who promoted this. When she passed away, the idea fizzled. He was still interested in the concept and was glad to see it mentioned in the plan.

Commissioner Diana asked how close the plan met the majority of the citizens’ goals and objectives. Mr. Engstrom explained that while visioning workshop was more open-ended, the goals and objectives were very representative of what the neighborhood wants. Robert Myers related that he thought the first open house may be contentious due to the neighborhood’s strong feelings. However in retrospect, he felt it was the best neighborhood meeting he had attended. Some residents do not want Carle to expand one single foot, and they will be disappointed. This plan calls for change in a predictable and orderly fashion, allowing people to plan for any changes. Mr. Myers felt the plan was a good balance between the different needs.

In response to Commissioner Bengtson, Mr. Engstrom stated 50 residents attended the open house, and he estimated half were from east of Crystal Lake Park. Commissioner Bengtson remarked those east of Crystal Lake Park are not as impacted as those directly north of Carle.

Commissioner Francis noted that a portion of Crystal Lake Park would be ceded to Carle. He wondered if Carle would commit to a neighborhood park and urged Carle to build a buffer. There should be serious consideration about any request to take away a park.

Noting that Carle has built new buildings in other areas of Urbana, Commissioner Bengtson asked if other neighborhoods were surveyed about Carle's growth. Mr. Engstrom said that Carle is conducting master plan updates, but he does not know how many people from outside the area are involved. Although Commissioner Bengtson did not want neighborhoods around Carle to disappear, she commented that everyone has to make changes.

Chairperson Cobb wanted to know if any stakeholders were given more weight in the decisions. Mr. Engstrom stated that staff tried to keep everyone on equal footing and tried to be fair. They did not interview anyone from the City of Urbana but did look at the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Mr. Engstrom discussed implementation strategies and noted each strategy correlates with goals and objectives. It also identifies the responsible City division or another entity (such as the CD Commission) and requires collaboration. Strategies for housing include redevelopment of Crystal View Townhomes, which will be on-going into next year. Other strategies are supporting housing improvements in the area with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME and Neighborhood Improvement Fund (NIF) monies as well as first-time homebuyer programs. Much of the plan's area is in the City's Community Development Target Area. Residents would also like a parking permit program due to the number of Carle visitors and employees who park in the area. Other strategies include a neighborhood center and promoting the semi-annual neighborhood cleanups.

Mr. Myers reviewed the current agreement between Carle and the City of Urbana. Because this agreement was created in 1995 and had to do with future development, it needs to be updated. The Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan would guide the direction of future development agreements, which then provide direction to City staff. These help answer the question, "What is the best way for the Carle campus to grow in an orderly fashion?"

Referencing page 51, Commissioner Moreland asked if the strategies included infrastructure, paving, curbs, etc. that could impact property values. Mr. Schneider answered yes, and mentioned the current infrastructure project on Harvey Street. The City's next Consolidated Plan, which will be for fiscal years 2010-2014, will include projects not in the current Consolidated Plan and plans to use funds for City programs, the Capital Improvement Plan, etc. Mr. Schneider clarified that the King Park neighborhood extended to the west boundary of Urbana, which was Wright Street.

Commissioner Roof commented that the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan was very comprehensive and asked if there were plans for other neighborhoods in Urbana. Mr. Engstrom explained the Comprehensive Plan addressed the City of Urbana as a whole and discussed goals and objectives for each neighborhood. The creation process was similar to that for the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan. Periodically the City may create a neighborhood plan if there is a need for one. Past conflict between Carle and the neighborhood residents sparked this plan. Mr. Schneider noted the neighborhood was experiencing many changes, with the demolition of Lakeside Terrace, new single family development, and Carle's expansion. United Citizens and

Neighbors (UCAN), which has been a very active neighborhood organization, was originally formed to address Carle's expansion into the neighborhood and other neighborhood issues.

Commissioner Roof asked if the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan was prioritized and whether funding priorities should be shifted. Mr. Schneider answered no, and clarified the City's Consolidated Plan has goals for all target area neighborhoods. Improvements are done on an as-needed basis.

Mr. Myers stated the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan came about due to the Mayor's concerns about Carle Hospital needing to change their master plan. The issue was what the City uses for guidance when making decisions. It is important to "do your homework first" so that decisions would not be made in a vacuum.

Agreeing the plan was good, Commissioner Vidoni asked if the past contentious issues between Carle and the neighborhood were addressed. Mr. Myers replied yes; staff tried to address as many as possible. The plan attempts to determine public interest and to produce the most good for the most people. He reviewed the 1996 agreement between the City and Carle and discussed how Carle had purchased and then resold homes north of a certain line. One benefit of a development agreement is to promote orderly growth and development rather than scaring neighbors by buying scattered houses.

Commissioner Bengtson mentioned the amenities around Crystal Lake Park.

Referencing Objective 16.4 on page 47, Chairperson Cobb inquired how the plan would promote the success of neighborhood organizations. Mr. Engstrom said the goal was to see neighborhood groups do more and involve more people.

In response to Chairperson Cobb, Mr. Engstrom said the goal is to work with apartment owners to promote investment in rental properties (Implementation Strategy H3, page 51). Mr. Schneider added that the intersection of Lincoln and Fairview Avenues are key corners, and the City would like the owners to upgrade the properties. Mr. Engstrom clarified there were no direct incentives. In response to Commissioner Moreland, Mr. Engstrom said the plan showed businesses on the west side of Lincoln Avenue. Commissioner Moreland felt the area was a great opportunity for residents rather than for the sake of commerce. Mr. Engstrom noted the Plan Concepts Map on page 41 showed the preservation of affordable housing.

Commissioner Diana stated the implementation strategies were good things on which to work. He asked if they would be converted to a "fishbone timeline profile" or organized under priorities. Mr. Engstrom replied this was a general timeline with no prioritization. Mr. Myers added the plan did provide short, medium and long term timing. If a long range plan was too specific, it would go out of date quickly. The goals are longer range and come from priorities from plans, policy direction from the Mayor and City Council, citizens, and staff work loads. The City is constantly reassessing priorities and tweaking them.

In response to Commissioner Silvis, Mr. Engstrom stated the median household income for the Crystal Lake Area was \$29,844, which was \$2,025 more than the rest of the City of Urbana. The City's average income is skewed by thousands of students. In response to Commissioner Francis, Mr. Engstrom said the definition of a household is determined by the census data.

Commissioner Silvis added that some neighborhoods have a diverse mix of incomes. Chairperson Cobb asked if the areas with the greatest negative responses were grouped, and Mr. Engstrom said no.

In response to Commissioner Francis, Mr. Engstrom requested that the CD Commission consider whether the plan is missing anything or has another perspective that staff has missed. Citizens have provided comments but no objections. He requested that commissioners e-mail or call him. Referencing page 51, Commissioner Francis was not in favor of investments for rental properties and preferred single family neighborhoods. Mr. Schneider clarified that landlords were required to keep their investments up to city code, and this plan encouraged investment in existing rental units.

In response to Commissioner Bengtson, Mr. Engstrom stated the City's Rental Registration Program was going well. Most rental properties are registered and are being inspected on a five year cycle.

Referencing page 52, Implementation Strategy M4, Commissioner Roof inquired about United Citizens and Neighbors (UCAN) establishing a program to shovel seniors' sidewalks. Mr. Schneider did not know if this came from UCAN or someone else. Commissioner Silvis added that everyone is supposed to help neighbors with snow shoveling.

Noting the strategies jump from specific to general and do not flow well, Commissioner Diana suggested grouping by subject and providing a summary. Mr. Engstrom responded this can be worked on.

Referencing Carle's development plan, Chairperson Cobb asked how many of Carle's points the City has accepted. Mr. Engstrom noted that Carle is in the process of creating a new master plan, and the City will rework the development agreements with Carle. Mr. Myers added the City was most interested in how the Carle campus interacts with neighbors. In a way, the City will be reviewing Carle's master plan. The City has been encouraging Carle to grow up, not out and to become energy efficient. Carle may build nine stories, with an ability to add two additional stories.

In response to Chairperson Cobb, Mr. Engstrom stated the Champaign County Fair Association does not have any plans to move from its current location.

Commissioner Silvis said the pictures, map and input were good, and she thanked staff for the plan.

Referencing a past property acquisition, Commissioner Francis remarked that he was not clear on the CD Commission's role. The City Council appears to take the CD Commission's recommendations with few questions, which would add to the CD Commission's responsibility. He wanted more information about the proposed property acquisition, such as insurance payments, prior refusal to sell before a fire, appraised value, etc. Commissioner Francis felt the CD Commission should act as a grand jury rather than as a rubberstamp.

Mr. Schneider stated the CD Commission may need a closed session to discuss detailed property negotiations. The current process involves an appraisal by a local state licensed appraiser and a

review by a different appraiser. It is standard procedure to offer appraised market value when purchasing a property with HUD funds. Mr. Schneider believed the information provided included all that staff had discussed that was germane to the decision, and he added that an overwhelming majority of the CD Commission approved the property acquisition. Noting that property acquisition is a long process, he proposed discussing with the Mayor and Legal Department staff a provision for the Director of the Community Development Services Department to acquire property up to a certain value.

Commissioner Diana thought a closed session could be appropriate at times and asked for a brief guideline as to what issues require a closed session. Commissioner Silvis commented on the CD Commission's scope of work. She saw the commissioners as stewards of City resources, not personal advocates for a particular seller. If it is in the best interest of the City of Urbana, the City should purchase the property, no matter what the seller's motivation.

There was discussion about what types of questions should be asked. Commissioner Roof remarked that fair is a point of debate. Mr. Schneider referenced the goals and objectives of the City's Consolidated Plan. The Annual Action Plan allocates a certain amount of funds to purchase properties as they become available. These lots are then transferred to the CHDOs to create more affordable housing for low and moderate income families. There was discussion about what is a fair price. Mr. Schneider suggested a creating a process for future acquisitions.

Commissioner Vidoni agreed the CD Commission should not be a rubberstamp. He felt it was good other commissioners wanted to be analytical. He also believed the City has done what was needed. Chairperson Cobb supported the suggestion to provide more information. Mr. Schneider stated that staff tries to include all necessary information in the memorandum. Noting that everyone has a unique perspective, he requested that commissioners call or e-mail him if they had questions and he would work to provide the additional information.

In response to Commissioner Roof, Mr. Schneider said it would take research to have a mechanism in place to bid on properties at auctions. Staff would need to work with the City's Legal Department to develop that strategy. Mr. Schneider clarified that the AAP is the overriding goal, which must tie back to the Consolidated Plan.

Adjournment: Chairperson Cobb adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Recorded by Connie Eldridge

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