

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: April 5, 2012

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Carey Hawkins Ash, Andrew Fell, Tyler Fitch, Dannie Otto, Michael Pollock, Bernadine Stake, Mary Tompkins, Marilyn Upah-Bant

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Lew Hopkins

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Manager; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Emily Blumenthal, Parker Boland, Caitlin Case, Tomasz Dziergas, Mark Gemein, Kiera House, Yuchi Jin, Kerri Malone, Natalie Ossouski, Flora Ramirez, Ivan Richardson, Justin Swinford, Susan Taylor

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

Chairperson Pollock called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The roll was called and a quorum was declared present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Chairperson Pollock requested that the Plan Commission move Plan Case No. 2174-S-12 under New Business so as to be the first case considered on the agenda. There was no objection.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Fitch moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes from both the March 8, 2012 meeting and the March 22, 2012 meeting as presented. Mr. Ash seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Plan Case No. 2174-S-12: Replat of Lot 455B Beringer Commons Subdivision No. 4, Final Plat.

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, presented this case to the Plan Commission. He presented background on the platting and development of the property. He explained that the reason for the proposed replat is to divide one lot into ten individual lots and to allow for the existing dwelling units to be sold as common-lot-line or townhouse-style development. In 2006, a plat was approved by the City Council to divide Lot 455 into 20 narrow lots for townhouse development. To better respond to market demands, that plat was not recorded and allowed to lapse, and two condominium buildings with 20 units were instead constructed on Lot 455. Following construction, in the wake of the national housing crisis, lenders generally have made loans for condominiums very difficult. This plat would essentially take the property back to what the City Council approved in 2006, but with one additional Subdivision Ordinance waiver not requested at that time. The Subdivision Ordinance requires each lot to be individually served with public sewer. In this case, a private common sanitary sewer line now extends underneath the existing dwellings and is covered by a common maintenance easement. So the waiver would be to allow the existing private sewer line to serve in place of public sewer. To retrofit each townhouse with a new sewer lateral line underneath the slab-on-grade building and into the constructed street is unreasonable.

The Plan Commission asked whether the existing units meeting building codes for common-lot-line or townhouse-style developments (particularly firewall requirements), and about the maintenance of the existing dwelling units if the proposed replat and subdivision waiver are approved.

Mr. Myers responded that the City's Building Safety Division has determined that the existing development meets the building code requirements for attached townhomes. They found that the existing development meets the firewall separation requirements, including provision in the attic. Regarding regular maintenance, the homeowner covenants require that any work done on an individual unit conform with the other units in the same building. A common maintenance fund is to be set up to cover sewer repairs. He is not sure how maintenance of the common roof is to be handled. The applicant may be able to answer that question.

The Plan Commission asked how many units in the building have been sold as condominiums? Mr. Myers stated his understanding was that one of the ten condo units have sold, and that one owner and the developer are co-applicants for this plat request.

With no more questions for City staff, Chair Pollock offered the applicant an opportunity to address the Commission.

Ivan Richardson, the applicant, explained that if a developer owns over 10% of condominium units, Fannie Mae will not give a new purchaser long-term financing. However, they will finance zero-lot-line units which is the reason for requesting this replat. The person who purchased the one unit paid cash and did not need financing.

Mr. Pollock asked why Lot 455A is not included in the proposed replat. Mr. Richardson explained that 455A is owned by someone else who sold most of his units prior to changes in lending rules for condominiums.

Mr. Pollock asked why the developer built the condominiums with one sewer line running underneath the building. Mr. Richardson replied that the lots are narrow and it made more sense to have one line rather than 10 lateral lines. The sewer line should actually require less maintenance because it is protected by the building.

With no further questions, Chair Pollock opened asked for any Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Mr. Fitch moved that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2174-S-12 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation for approval along with the subdivision waiver recommended by City staff. Ms. Upah-Bant seconded the motion. Roll call was as follows:

Mr. Fell	-	Yes	Mr. Fitch	-	Yes
Mr. Otto	-	Yes	Mr. Pollock	-	Yes
Ms. Stake	-	Yes	Ms. Tompkins	-	Yes
Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes	Mr. Ash	-	Yes

The motion was approved by unanimous vote. Mr. Myers noted that this case would be forwarded to City Council on Monday, April 16, 2012.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2170-CP-12: A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to adopt the 2012 Downtown Urbana Plan as an element of the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan.

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, noted this as a continued public hearing and referred to the changes suggested by the Plan Commission at a previous meeting. The suggested changes included the following:

- Page 70 – Add an arrow showing traffic flow to Downtown Urbana from the east on Main Street, and a second arrow showing traffic flow to Downtown Urbana from the south along Vine Street.

Mr. Fitch stated that this is important to him because Victory Park is a beautiful attribute to the neighborhood to the east. In the long term, the Urbana Park District plans to redevelop Weaver Park which is at the end of Main Street. He believes that they should identify the major key connections into the downtown area.

- Page 63 – Include economic development in the Vision Statement.

Mr. Fitch suggested that the language could be amended as follows: “...*compatible new building development in appropriate locations. It is an economically vibrant environment with welcoming public spaces...*”

Chair Pollock recommended that they also add a *residential* aspect to the vision statement as well.

The Plan Commission felt comfortable with City staff writing the language to reflect these two additions to the Vision Statement.

Mr. Myers added that Mr. Fitch last time had commented that cost estimates for implementation would be useful.

Mr. Fitch commented that he realizes that City staff cannot get cost estimates prior to the plan being adopted. Chair Pollock pointed out that the proposed plan will be a long serving document. Cost estimates will change drastically, so any estimate included in the proposed plan would be inaccurate when the time comes to start implementing any of the projects.

The Plan Commission and City staff discussed financing. Mr. Myers explained that Tax Increment Finance (TIF) 1 and 2 monies will be used for projects such as the Boneyard Creek improvements. A number of the projects will be private infill development projects possibly with some City incentives for some critical aspect. That might also be funded by TIF money as well. Other sources of funding could include the City’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Chair Pollock pointed out that the City’s responsibility in terms of the eventual development of many of these elements is to help plan them and to provide assistance in various sites in public infrastructure. Most of the money will be private money. The City’s job is to make it as easy as possible for the property owners to justify spending their money and to provide an environment that is suitable for their investment. As with the original Downtown Plan, much of the improvements rely on private developers to come in and work with the City.

Ms. Stake commented that she wants the City to fund improvements to Lincoln Square Mall and help it return to the vibrant shopping center that it once was. Mr. Myers responded that the City currently has a development agreement with the owners of Lincoln Square. City monies are available to fund specific improvements at Lincoln Square. Additionally, the City is funding critical improvements to the Urbana Landmark Hotel using TIF funds. The City is open to discussing participating in any new private initiative for the mall.

The Plan Commission asked how successful the City was in raising private dollars for projects in the original Downtown Plan. Mr. Myers answered that in the 2002 Downtown Strategic Plan, a lot of plans were made for private properties, but it required the property owners to have the same vision. He sees the draft plan as more realistic. It will require both private development and City funding and incentives. But many City projects in the draft plan can be begun

independently. Also, funding for some key projects like Boneyard Creek is already programmed. Other aspects of the plan will require public/private partnerships. For example, for the block north of the City building, the City purchased all of the properties and have requested RFPs from developers to redevelop the entire block. We can expect some level of public funding to redevelop the site. Still other redevelopment projects may have hurdles other than funding. We'd like to see those projects succeed. Another thing the City can do is to find successful businesses downtown which create major activity and find ways for those businesses to expand in place or elsewhere in downtown. Two examples are The Food Coop and Black Dog Smoke and Ale House. Both have great growth potential, and the City should find ways for those businesses to succeed downtown.

The Plan Commission and City staff discussed the desirability of the Post Office being located downtown, either in the Independent Media Center Building or elsewhere downtown. The proposed plan seems to recommend both the post office at its current site and a plaza in the post office parking area. Following discussion the Plan Commission agreed that the plan should recognize the desirability for a downtown Post Office, whether at its current location or elsewhere downtown.

Mr. Fitch commented that the wayfinding signs now being installed are already helping people find downtown parking.

Chairman Pollock asked if anyone in the audience had any comments. Hearing none, Chairman Pollock entertained a motion from the Commission.

Mr. Ash moved that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2170-CP-12 to the City Council with a recommendation for approval including the changes requested by the Plan Commission at tonight's meeting. Mr. Fitch seconded the motion.

Chair Pollock acknowledged the excellent work carried out by City staff member Jeff Engstrom in carrying out this project. The plan is very well done.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Fitch	-	Yes	Mr. Otto	-	Yes
Mr. Pollock	-	Yes	Ms. Stake	-	Yes
Ms. Tompkins	-	Yes	Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes
Mr. Ash	-	Yes	Mr. Fell	-	Yes

The motion was approved by unanimous vote. Mr. Myers noted that this case would be forwarded to the City Council on Monday, April 16, 2012.

7. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

Commissioners should have available to them the 2011 Plan Commission Annual Report. The report provides a summary of all the cases that the Plan Commission reviewed and considered in 2011. A full version, including meeting minutes and approved ordinances, is available upon request in paper or electronic format.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission