

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: October 17, 2024

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Council Chambers, City Hall, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Dustin Allred, Lew Hopkins, Bill Rose, Karen Simms, Chenxi Yu

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Will Andresen, Andrew Fell, Debarah McFarland

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner; Will Kolschowsky, Senior Management Analyst; Carol Mitten, City Administrator; Marcus Ricci, Planner II; Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Annie F. Adams, Susan Burgstrom, Cole Filges, David Huber, Audrey Ishii, Rita Morocoima-Black, Anna Syi, Alec Thomas

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum of the members present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, requested that they move the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2050 Presentation to be held after Communications. Mr. Hopkins moved that the LRTP 2050 Presentation be held after Communications on the agenda. Mr. Rose seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the September 19, 2024 regular meeting and of the October 3, 2024 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Rose moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Ms. Simms seconded the motion. Both sets of minutes were approved as written by unanimous voice vote.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

- ❖ Email from Liz Cardman regarding Plan Case No. 2493-T-24 dated October 2, 2024
- ❖ Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2050
- ❖ *Imagine Urbana* – Community Feedback Draft dated August 15, 2024
- ❖ *Imagine Urbana* – Plan Commission Study Session Agenda dated October 17, 2024

K. STUDY SESSION

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2050 Presentation

Susan Burgstrom, Planning Manager at the Regional Planning Commission, approached the Plan Commission to give an overview of the Long Range Transportation Plan 2050. She talked about the following:

- LRTP 2050 Web Plan
 - Overview
 - Existing Conditions
 - Goals
 - 2050 Vision
 - Public Involvement
 - Appendices
- Goals
 - 5 LRTP 2050 Goals
 - Safety
 - Reliability
 - Sustainability
 - Equity & Quality of Life
 - Connectivity
 - Under Each Goal
 - Goal Statement
 - Objectives and Performance Measures
 - Strategies
- City of Urbana Goals and How They Relate to the LRTP Goals and Strategies
- Vision
 - LRTP 2045 Status
 - Future Projects
 - Scenario Modeling
 - Funding
 - Implementation
- Upcoming Projects for City of Urbana
 - Complete Streets Projects
 - Other Agencies with Projects Impacting Urbana
 - Bicycle/Pedestrian Projects
- North Lincoln Avenue
- Florida Avenue
- Vine Street
- Illustrative Projects
- Public Outreach
- City of Urbana Outreach
- Next Steps

Chair Allred asked if any members of the Plan Commission had questions or comments for Ms. Burgstrom.

Mr. Hopkins asked what the status is for the extension of Olympian Drive from Cunningham Avenue to the current eastern terminus of it. Ms. Burgstrom stated that after meeting with City staff, she was informed that this is not as high a priority as other projects in the Urbana area because it is helping bypass access to the City of Urbana. However, it is listed as an illustrative project in the LRTP. She noted that there are 56 illustrative projects, so she did not put all of them in the presentation. Mr. Hopkins stated that it is important they are included in the plan because in the future, the City of Urbana may want to change the status because of funding resources.

Mr. Hopkins inquired about the Florida Avenue extension to High Cross Road. Ms. Burgstrom stated that it is listed as an illustrative project.

Mr. Hopkins stated that it is not clear to him that the highest priorities are the multi-use/shared use paths going all the way to Curtis Road, and this is in part because it is not clear this is the direction that makes sense for development in terms of what the City is doing. Since this is also considered an illustrative project, it might be best to deal with this in the future.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the illustrative projects are prioritized. Ms. Burgstrom said that they are not prioritized by time frame. They are all listed as equal status in the LRTP 2050.

Chair Allred asked where the City of Urbana Goals that Ms. Burgstrom referenced in her presentation come from. Ms. Burgstrom replied that they come from the Urbana Strategic Plan [i.e. Mayor and City Council Strategic Goals], not from *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan draft because at the time that Regional Planning Commission was creating the LRTP 2050, they did not have access to the *Imagine Urbana* draft.

E. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2493-T-24 – A request by David Huber to amend Article VI of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to eliminate lot width and area requirements for two-family dwellings in the R-2 (Single-Family Residential) and R-3 (Single- and Two-Family Residential) Zoning Districts.

Chair Allred re-opened the public hearing for Plan Case No. 2493-T-24. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, presented the updated staff report to the Plan Commission. He reviewed the following proposed changes to Section VI-3 of the Zoning Ordinance:

1. *Proposed Change #1* – Simplify Paragraph VI-3.A to allow reuse of existing lots. Repeal the existing Paragraph VI-3.A and replace with the following language:
 - A. For new lots, minimum lot area and width requirements are set forth in Table VI-3.
Exception: new lots for common-lot-line dwelling (see paragraph VI-3.D.3 below).
 - B. For existing lots, there are no minimum lot area or width requirements.
2. *Proposed Change #2* – Repeal additional lot area and width requirements for duplexes in R-2 and R-3 Districts in Paragraphs VI-3.B and C. This is unchanged from the previous memo.
3. *Proposed Change #3* – Minor Adjustments to MOR District. Reformat, renumber and make minor changes to Section VI-3.D by separating the paragraph into a paragraph with a couple of subparagraphs to make it easier to follow and also making some minor language tweaks.
4. *Proposed Change #4* – Simplify minimum lot dimensions for common-lot-line dwellings. Basically, making the same changes as for duplexes by getting rid of the additional lot width and area requirements for common-lot-line dwellings but explicitly stating that they would

have no minimum lot area if a new dwelling is being constructed AND also giving a minimum street frontage of 20 feet.

Mr. Garcia clarified that these changes would not create consequences in other areas of the Zoning Ordinance. He stated that City staff recommends approval of Plan Case No. 2493-T-24 with the proposed changes as stated.

Chair Allred asked if any members of the Plan Commission had questions for staff.

Mr. Hopkins asked if a common-lot-line building would require a new lot. Mr. Garcia said almost certainly.

Mr. Hopkins asked if a new lot has to be 60 feet unless it is a common-lot-line building, correct? Mr. Garcia said that is correct, which is why he added an exception to the language for common-lot-line lots.

Mr. Hopkins asked if only semi-detached/two unit common-lot-line dwellings are permitted in R-2 and R-3 Districts. Multi common-lot-line dwellings are only permitted in the R-4 District. Mr. Garcia said yes. Mr. Hopkins stated this implies that a person could build two common-lot-line units on 40 feet. Mr. Garcia replied that is what it means. They would also require five-foot-side yards.

Mr. Hopkins asked if a common-lot-line unit is a dwelling unit or a permitted zoning use unit. Would a person be able to build a duplex on a 20-foot lot? Mr. Garcia said he needed to research an answer.

Chair Allred stated that the language in Section VI-3.D seems to contradict the language in Table VI-3. Mr. Garcia explained that the intent is to direct people to Table VI-3 for everything except common-lot-line dwelling units.

With there being no further questions for City staff, Chair Allred re-opened the public hearing for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Mr. Hopkins credited City staff for simplifying the language. He then read the definition of "common-lot-line dwelling unit". He said it specifies that they are dwelling units, so they cannot be duplexes. He said that his understanding is that in R-2 and R-3 Districts, we can only have semi-detached common-lot-line dwellings, and in R-4 and higher zoned districts, we can have multi-unit common-lot-line dwelling units. Separate approval is required, which presumably is either exactly or analogous to subdivision approval. Mr. Garcia stated that is correct. It would be a minor subdivision for five lots or fewer, and a major subdivision for more than five lots.

Chair Allred asked if it would be realistic to have three common-lot-line units where the interior unit would not have any yard requirements and could have a width of 20 feet. Mr. Rose said yes.

Chair Allred asked if there is any concern about there not being any depth requirement to the lot. Mr. Hopkins stated that unless there were closely spaced streets, you are not going to have a small depth because of the frontage. Mr. Hopkins stated that he feels the language is good. He felt the language deals with the question of ownership and rental potentially. It creates the option for a different kind of development, which is useful to our mix in Urbana.

Mr. Rose moved that the Plan Commission forward Case No. 2493-T-24 to the City Council with a recommendation for approval including the proposed changes presented at this meeting. Ms. Simms seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes	Mr. Rose	-	Yes
Ms. Simms	-	Yes	Ms. Yu	-	Yes
Mr. Allred	-	Yes			

The motion passed by unanimous vote. Mr. Garcia stated that this case would be forwarded to Committee of the Whole on Monday, November 4, 2024.

F. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

G. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

H. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

I. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Audrey Ishii, resident of the City of Urbana and member of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, approached the Plan Commission to comment on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2050. She said that every project mentions safety and reducing bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities as a goal. While the Plan does not and should not mention speed reduction, she felt that at times, the responsibility of individual municipalities is kind of glossed over. The goal of this Plan is to optimize things across the entire region for the benefit of all the municipalities. However, what may be good for one municipality is not necessarily good for others.

Ms. Ishii talked about the number of fatalities in the City of Urbana and the City of Champaign. She felt it would be better if the Plan mentioned the numbers on a per capita basis instead of by town.

She stated that she would like to see the Plan talk more about equity. There are a lot of communities that are outside of Urbana along University Avenue; and on a regional basis, they really matter. She said that there are six mobile homes parks located along University Avenue. Some people do not have access to vehicles and ride Veo bikes to get around. It would be good to have bike lanes and somewhat slowed traffic on University Avenue. She said that she would like to see people/municipalities realize that they need to do something about this because things do not just happen when the Regional Planning Commission suggests them. For example, it would be beneficial and provide safety to have a crosswalk at Maple Street for pedestrians to cross University Avenue. There are no plans to provide a crosswalk at this intersection even though many people cross at this intersection because there is too much traffic to cross at University and Cunningham Avenues. The City of Urbana should have already provided a safer way for pedestrians to cross University Avenue.

She stated that she is appreciative that the City of Urbana has provided a bike path up to Ambucs Park. Mr. Hopkins asked for more information about the location of the bike path. Ms. Ishii stated that the bike path goes from Cunningham Avenue to Ambucs Park along University Avenue. She and other members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission would like to see the bike path and sidewalks extend to Guardian Drive.

J. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

K. STUDY SESSION

Image Urbana Comprehensive Plan Draft – Discuss Big Move 4: Strengthen Downtown Urbana’s Role as the Economic Driver of the City

Kevin Garcia, Will Kolschowsky, Carol Mitten and Andrea Ruedi approached the Plan Commission to give a presentation on Big Move 4: Strengthen Downtown Urbana’s Role as the Economic Driver of the City.

Ms. Mitten, City Administrator, explained that they have singled this Big Move out to present to the Plan Commission in response to Mr. Hopkin’s question of whether Downtown Urbana is really the economic driver of the City. Her answer to this question is no, but it should be and has long been intended to be. The following presentation explains why they believe this to be important:

- Champaign vs. Urbana
 - 2020 Census
 - Retail Sales Volume
 - # of Employers
 - Median Household Income
- Urbana vs. Peer Group
 - High Proportion of Students
 - Low Household Size
 - High Transiency
 - High Percentage of Rental Housing
 - Lower Income/Higher Poverty Levels
- Revenue Per Acre – EAV (Equalized Assessed Value)
- Tax Exempt Land Parcels, Including Rights-of-Way
- Population of Urbana vs. Size of Road Network
 - Statistics of People and Size of Road Network from 1970 to 2020
- Revenue Minus Cost – Dollars Per Acre
 - Lincoln Square Mall
 - Lincoln and Nevada
 - 901 Western
 - Campus Circle
- Population Per Square Mile vs. Size of Urbana
- City of Urbana Zoning Map
- B-4 Zoning
- Downtown Urbana Parking Supply
- Revenue Minus Cost – Dollars Per Acre
 - Philo Road

- Downtown
- Apartment Buildings
- Apartment Complexes
- Revenue Minus Cost – Dollars Per Acre (Downtown)
- Revenue Minus Cost – Dollars Per Acre (Downtown)
- Downtown Urbana Revitalization – Lincoln Square Mall
- % of Home Rule Sales Tax by Business District
- “What’s in Your Square?” – Vision for Lincoln Square Mall
- “What’s in Your Square?” – Mapping the Square
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts
- Central TIF District
- *Imagine Urbana* Draft Plan Feedback
- City of Urbana Business Districts

Chair Allred commented that the way Move #4 is stated in the Plan is different than the way Ms. Mitten just stated, and this is important. Ms. Mitten said that we want to make Downtown Urbana “an” economic driver; whereas, the way Big Move #4 is written in the Plan states we want to strengthen Downtown Urbana’s role as “the” economic driver of the City. He pointed out that how it is written in the Plan goes against all of the data that Ms. Mitten just presented. The written language is telling a business located in a performing location that it is not as important as the Downtown area. While he believes it makes sense to encourage this kind of development in Downtown Urbana, we need to be careful how we word the language so that we are not suggesting one area is more important than other areas in the City.

Ms. Mitten said that she does not mean to sound argumentative as she explains the reason why they choose the wording they did. She stated that she tried to show that the longstanding intention is that Downtown Urbana is “the” economic driver because we have concentrated density there. The goal as reflected in our zoning is that we want to concentrate development there. Also, we have intentionally created a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District in the downtown area. This does not mean that the other areas are not important to the City because we derive benefits from them. Chair Allred said that the wording is missing the intentionality piece. He suggested wording it to read “Big Move #4 – Make Downtown Urbana the economic driver of the City”.

Chair Allred stated that he did not see anything written in Big Move #4 to suggest that there are regulatory barriers to development in the downtown area. He just wants to make sure that there is not something that they are not addressing. Mr. Garcia, Principal Planner, responded that the City removed parking requirements for Downtown Urbana in 2005 or so. Many of the good things that have happened Downtown Urbana since then would not have been allowed to happen because of the previous parking requirements. The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 9 and there are no setback requirements, so he does not see any friction cause by the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he believes very little of the City of Champaign’s retail (\$1.4 billion) comes from Downtown Champaign. He also believes that none of Urbana’s retail [\$400 million] comes from Downtown Urbana’s retail; however, we are saying that we want to solve our economic problem by claiming and making Downtown Urbana the economic driver for the City. He wonders if it makes sense for us to keep beating our heads and being frustrated even more years than some of us have been around with the idea that it’s the only way to go. He thinks this would be a big mistake. He stated that he believes if we are going to talk about the economic drivers of

the City and think about how to improve the ratios for infrastructure cost versus property taxes versus retail revenue, then we need to think of the whole City as the economic driver. The data Ms. Mitten just presented clearly shows the best way to generate more revenue, which is developing more apartments near the University of Illinois campus. The City put out a Request For Proposal (RFP) for Downtown Urbana and got no responses. Regulatory reasons apparently are not the reason. Maybe we do not have the right understanding of the role that different parts of the community play in generating that income. So, should we be pushing for Downtown Urbana to be the economic driver of the City? This doesn't mean that we ignore all of the parking lots or the fact that we should think about ways to improve Downtown Urbana. He just does not feel that it makes sense to put all of our cards there, and the Comprehensive Plan needs to take this into account.

Ms. Mitten stated that there is no other part of Urbana where we also have not had big opportunities to make a difference in recent years. There is no place else where we have the opportunity to be as intentional because we do not have the tools. We could create another TIF district, which is challenging itself, and add in the fact the size of staff we have, it is challenging to manage multiple TIF districts with intentionality.

She went on to say that we have resistance in areas that might be attractive to the demand for housing where Mr. Hopkins mentioned, so we have limitation. She commended the Plan Commission in changing the B-3U Zoning District and believes it will hopefully make a difference. She noted that what is impeding us right now from attracting development to Downtown Urbana is not based on demand from "consumers". It has to do with the cost of building, which has increased. It has to do with having a product that institutional investors will invest in. She said that we have seen this with the Royer Hotel. There were investors who had ideas but could not back them up with finances. It took an investor from outside of Urbana to be able to follow through with redeveloping the hotel. It also took an outside investor to develop "The Gather". She believes that we need to figure out how to attract financial development resources to Urbana to get some projects done. Mr. Hopkins said that he agreed with her but feels that we need to present it in a very different way.

Ms. Simms stated that she went out to eat at the African restaurant on Sunday and afterwards wanted to get a drink, but everything in Urbana was closed after 9:00 pm, so she went to another city. She asked how do we incentivize or think about other tools that make Downtown Urbana marketable. She stated that there are planning issues, and there are equity and cultural issues that we need to think about as well. We need to broaden who we think we are attracting, how we are attracting them, and what are the strategies to create the kinds of environments that are competitive. Ms. Mitten responded saying that TIF is a very special tool. The City of Urbana is the steward of the TIF dollars, which belong to the taxing districts. Of the 12-13% of the property tax bill, the City of Urbana only gets three and a half cents of every dollar. The only other resource is the general fund to provide incentives unless we get a grant. We rely so heavily on TIF because we do not have general funds.

Ms. Mitten went on to say that they believe attracting housing development Downtown Urbana will attract other businesses because the housing customers will provide enough people to support restaurants and bars. Housing is critical. She has seen this happen in Downtown Washington D.C. It can happen in Urbana, but it will take a while, and we are trying to figure out some of the pieces and parts that we can influence.

Ms. Yu asked how it is working out for the housing development immediately north of City Hall. Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development, said that when 200 Vine had their grand opening/ribbon cutting, they were already fully leased at that time. The owners have reported to the City stated that it is a mix of tenants.

Ms. Yu asked why this has worked out so well, and other parking lots are not able to be developed in a similar fashion. She asked what the City did right to make 200 Vine successful. Will Kolschowsky, Senior Management Analyst, believes that the City did a RFP for the site three times before we found a successful bidder. Much of the process was understanding a lot of local dynamics by asking local developers what they were looking for and what style of housing would work for them. He noted that incentives also helped get the project over the finish line. It was a long process that took a couple of failed attempts and a lot of effort to figure out what the right mix was for the site. Ms. Ruedi added that the RFP was put on Open Gov, so staff could see which developers were interested in doing a housing project. Staff followed up with the developers that had expressed interest or downloaded the RFP from Open Gov. Most of the developers interested had other projects going on and did not have time to submit a RFP. Some of the developers expressed concern about what the property taxes would be on the property after building something. Others simply could not get the investment from others to help on doing the project. So, now City staff is trying to regroup so we can make development more attractive to developers. Ms. Yu stated that it does take time; however, we do see progress with having a beautiful apartment complex at 200 Vine and a county plaza being revitalized. Hopefully, the Royer Hotel will open soon. She said it is a missed opportunity now, and it represents one of the biggest potentials, so we need to be patient and keep working on it. Ms. Ruedi stated that H Mart will be opening soon in the next month or two. City staff hope that it will be a driver to bring additional people to Downtown Urbana.

Mr. Rose understands this to mean that the City prioritizes housing over retail or office development. He wondered if this is reflected appropriately in *Imagine Urbana*. His understanding from reading the draft plan is that we are a City, and of course we do housing and we need to do it well. However, City staff is saying that housing will spearhead economic development. If so, then he thinks the draft plan should be reworded to say this. Should the Plan Commission imagine a future where accommodating housing as a spearhead should be a focus for them. Ms. Mitten replied that this is a really interesting observation, and she will spend some time reflecting on it. However, we could talk about the different broad types of properties – industrial, commercial, office, retail of various kinds, and housing.

Ms. Mitten stated that she has been economic development adjacent for basically her entire career in various capacities, so she feels like she has some creditability on the subject about Urbana's future. She did not see Urbana building a lot of industrial or a speculative office market. This leaves us with either the regional type or localized type of retail, and she feels we are better with the local type. Local retail thrives with a customer base that has good access, meaning they live close by. So, she believes that building a mix of housing types and affordability levels is going to be where Urbana shows progress over the next ten years. She said that it is not that there is potential in other areas, it is that there is so much potential in Downtown Urbana.

Mr. Rose stated that there are different types of housing. If our intent is to grow, we might look at where the most likely investment might be. Ms. Mitten stated that she agrees and discussions will be held amongst City staff to figure out how to package up what we want to sell it to other people to encourage them to live in Urbana. Ms. Simms stated that she does not feel that the City of

Urbana uses language to tell people what we are trying to create and attracts people to Urbana's culture and climate. She used Shaker Heights [Ohio] as a model of mixed income, multi-racial, multicultural, very diverse, vibrant community. The City of Urbana needs to focus on how to attract people of different diversities and demographics. She said that communities that have done this well have partnered with community development grants and have a huge prioritization of economic development with small business.

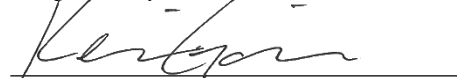
Ms. Simms stated that in her earlier comments she talked about using other tools to, and she meant other than planning. She said that we are not thinking about the whole when we are talking about investing in building and business. We need to increase capacity for people to want to be here, not just with tax incentives but with other tools to help plant and invest and mentor people to stay here but also keep their dollars here. It is a blending of strategies. She said Big.Small.All comes to mind. There was a vision of other communities that we wanted to be like, and we lost a sense of identity. The Comprehensive Plan is articulating a vision for the City of Urbana that is unique and drive and purposeful. How do we get around this and not just think about what is possible now?

Mr. Garcia stated that at the next meeting, City staff would be presenting and talking with the Plan Commission about incremental development, walkability, connectivity, and future land use descriptions.

L. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

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

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission