

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

DATE: March 5, 2025

APPROVED

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING: David Hays, Kathryn Holliday, Dennis Roberts, Angela Urban, Andrew Weiss

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Laura O'Donnell, Trent Shepard

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner and Zoning Administrator; Marcus Ricci, Planner II; Teri Andel, Planning Administrative Assistant II

OTHERS PRESENT: Susan Appel, Phyllis Winters-Williams

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Urban called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Mr. Ricci recommended moving the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan discussion under Item L – Study Session be held before Item K – Staff Report on the agenda. He noted that Mr. Garcia was present to give an update on the Comprehensive Plan. Chair Urban agreed to the change.

C. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes of the November 6, 2024 Regular Meeting

The minutes of November 6, 2024 regular meeting were presented for approval.

Mr. Hays asked what property the two communications for the November 6, 2024 meeting referred to. Mr. Ricci replied that the emails from Kathleen Jones and Stewart Berlocher were regarding 108 North Webber Street. Chair Urban confirmed.

Mr. Hays moved that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes of the November 6, 2024 regular meeting as written. Mr. Weiss seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by voice vote as written.

D. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Monitoring of Historic Properties – Dennis Roberts

E. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

F. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

G. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

I. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

J. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Chair Urban opened this item on the agenda.

Mr. Roberts briefly gave an update on each property he monitors. He asked what the City's legal stance is to require a property owner to make needed repairs on a property that has been designated a historic landmark or district. Mr. Ricci replied that the City does not have regulations regarding demolition by neglect or enforcing repairs on properties that are not rental properties. Mr. Roberts stated that since it is a stairway that needs repaired at 104 North Central Avenue, which is the Halberstadt House, it would be considered a safety hazard. He said that sometimes reminding people that the City is watching is an impetus for people to take action. Mr. Ricci stated that this would be a good opportunity to find out how the Historic Preservation Commission works with other City agencies and organizations and with our landmark property owners and residents.

Mr. Ricci stated that this is the type of monitoring that the Commission hoped for to keep an eye on existing historic landmark and district properties and to be able to address issues before they fall down, or someone gets hurt. Mr. Roberts added that we are watching, but it is really on the onus of the property owner to be responsible for their property.

Chair Urban reminded the Commission members that there is a Google spreadsheet where they can add this type of information about the properties that they monitor. Mr. Hays mentioned that he had problems linking into the spreadsheet and gets error messages. Chair Urban said she had problems as well. Mr. Ricci said that he would look into what might be causing the issues.

Mr. Hays stated that there is nothing to report on the properties in the 800 block of West Main Street.

L. STUDY SESSION

Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan Discussion

Chair Urban opened this item on the agenda. She invited Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner and Zoning Administrator for the City of Urbana, to give an update on the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan. He began by talking about the timeline. He stated that there is still time to submit comments online. He said that staff would be able to add a couple of items related to historic preservation to dovetail nicely with some other things in the plan, so staff could really use input from the Historic Preservation Commission. He believed it would also be a good idea to add updating the Historic Preservation Plan in the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Urban asked if the plan was being adjudicated in real time or do they need to submit the same type of comments that they might have already submitted. Mr. Garcia said that staff has tried to address most comments that they have received so far. If the Commission members submitted comments and notice that changes have not been made, staff is still in the process of making changes. He said that staff has been keeping track of changes as they make them. It would be a good idea to also keep track of comments that staff did not agree with or did not make changes in the plan in response.

Mr. Ricci mentioned that some members have a question about if the new plan would have a list of other plans that are still active or are no longer listed because they are incorporated into the new plan or are obsolete. He said that there was a list; however, staff has been talking with Plan Commission members about what other plans they should carry over into the new Comprehensive Plan. The ones they are discussing to carry over are actual approved amendments to the existing 2005 Comprehensive Plan, such as the Bicycle Master Plan, the 2012 Downtown Plan, Champaign County's Greenways and Trails, and the Hazard Mitigation Plan. There are certainly some other plans that have influenced the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, such as the Downtown Study.

Mr. Ricci asked if when the Historic Preservation Commission does a revised version of the Historic Preservation Plan, could it be adopted as an element to the new Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Garcia said yes, especially if the new Comprehensive Plan says something about updating the Historic Preservation Plan. Chair Urban stated that it is important to show that the Historic Preservation Plan and the new Comprehensive Plan reflect each other.

Mr. Ricci stated that when doing the grant writing for a new Historic Preservation Plan, it would be helpful to be able to state that historic preservation philosophies were mentioned in the new Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Roberts asked if they should submit their comments on the online input site. Mr. Garcia said yes. He showed how to get to the link from the City's webpage.

Mr. Garcia briefly showed some of the different text in the proposed *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan. He mentioned that there are drafts of some maps. He talked about Place Types (known as Future Land Use designations in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan). He showed how to make comments on the proposed new plan. He mentioned that the content is more refined since staff has been holding study sessions with the Plan Commission for the last month and a half.

Mr. Hays commented that when you look at the different Big Moves, you think about the places where recommendations for revising the Historic Preservation Plan could be mentioned, and there are multiple places. Mr. Garcia said that this has been the case with other topics as well. It is hard to slot certain things into one area.

Mr. Roberts asked if staff could add another Big Move “L” that deals with historic preservation as an important aspect of city life, culture, and history. Mr. Garcia said that he is hesitant to add another Big Move without giving it some serious thought. It could be an option. Mr. Roberts suggested maybe the Historic Preservation Commission members should go to the Plan Commission meeting and advocate for more content to be in the new plan for historic preservation. Mr. Garcia stated that the public hearing for *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan at the Plan Commission meeting is a great time for folks to voice their opinion whether it is as a representative of the Historic Preservation Commission or as a resident in Urbana.

Chair Urban stated that she does not see any changes reflecting the comments that she knows were made. How do the Commission members know whether their comments have been considered, added to the plan or whether their comments were rejected? Mr. Garcia stated that he will go through to ensure that staff has addressed all of the comments that have been submitted, and he will figure out a way to best convey this.

Ms. Holliday said that the best place to add content about historic preservation would be under Big Move 3, because an update to the Historic Preservation Plan would make it more comprehensive across the City, not just relevant to Downtown Urbana. She said a new Historic Preservation Plan should involve surveying the City as a whole and understanding in a granular way historic preservation needs of different parts of the City. She said a one-size fits all Historic Preservation Ordinance does not work anymore. A good new Ordinance would be tailored to understanding the needs of individual pieces of the City in different ways. She said that adding a bullet point to other Big Moves, such as the ones for the economic drive for downtown and for the cultural vibrancy of downtown, would be all that is needed to make sure that element of historic preservation and historic fabric is essential for the way we understand downtown. Chair Urban added that many people think of historic preservation is for buildings, but that is not what Ms. Holliday is saying. Historic fabric of our City and our neighborhoods each have their own special heritage.

Mr. Ricci stated that adding bullet points about historic preservation under different Big Moves is another way to look at everything as opposed to looking at it by itself. Whenever one looks at a project, thinking about whether there is a way that historic preservation can be incorporated into that project or plan. Mr. Roberts said that historic preservation is a useful topic for the interest of the community to have adaptive reuse of buildings, which is an economical, historical, and efficient way of increasing value in the community without building new things or tearing something down. Mr. Hays suggested they add Objective 4.5 to Big Move 4 to really articulate historic preservation. By putting something about historic preservation here, anything else that references Big Move 4 as a touch point would connect with it.

Chair Urban appreciates the Plan Commission involving the Historic Preservation Commission in this process. The Historic Preservation Commission plans to use the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan to reference updating the Historic Preservation Plan.

K. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Ricci reported on the following:

Items of Interest:

- ***CLG Grant Update***

Mr. Ricci stated that he received emails from Susan Baker and John Pressley reminding him that CLG grants are federal funds that are passed through the State of Illinois. Ever since the end of 2024, funds have become more tenuous, so the State has not yet issued any CLG grants or made any announcements about them.

Historic Property Activities:

- **Landmarking and Districts**

Mr. Ricci stated that there have been no new applications.

- **Certificates of Appropriateness in Progress or Review**

Mr. Ricci talked about 210 South Race Street (HP-2021-COA-03). He mentioned that there has been progress on the exterior of the Hotel Royer with new lighting as well as work continues renovating the inside. He heard that the owner was filling the pool. He said that he has not heard when the hotel will reopen. Chair Urban said that she noticed the progress being made on the outside.

Mr. Ricci stated that there have been no new applications for Certificates of Appropriateness submitted.

He mentioned that he was notified that the Bills House, which is a rental property, is for sale. Someone had called inquiring about the process to demolish the house, upon which he replied that they would need to get a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Mr. Roberts commented that the City lost the façade of the Sipyard, and it was created into an outside drinking establishment. It has since become defunct, and a billboard was placed over the front. There is a political poster on the cover. He said that it does not serve the City to have an eyesore downtown. This is why he feels it is important for the Historic Preservation Commission to consider working on creating a design overlay district for Downtown Urbana. He pointed out that it may remain an empty alleyway. Someone could redevelop the space, and the redesign of it could affect the rest of the block. The City should provide some guidance so that whatever new construction does occur there eventually will have harmonic resemblance to elements on the street.

L. STUDY SESSION

Historic Preservation Plan

Chair Urban opened this item on the agenda. She said that the status of the CLG grants does create a little hiccup for updating the Historic Preservation Plan. Part of the timeline for updating the plan involved keeping in mind when the CLG grant cycle would begin again. She did not believe that the Commission should deviate from the timeline they set because a lot

could happen between now and then. She reviewed the timeline, which was established at the previous meeting, which is as follows:

February and March 2025	Internal review of 1998 Historic Preservation Plan
April and May 2025	Focus on external plans
June and July 2025	Meet to talk about what we want in an updated plan
August and September 2025	Get cost estimates

She mentioned that the Commission members need a way to make comments so other members can view them. Mr. Ricci suggested that the Commission members find a partner to discuss the pros and cons of the existing 1998 Historic Preservation Plan and any improvements they each would like to make in the new plan. There can only be two members due to Open Meetings Act requirements; however, they could have people outside the Commission join their group. Each group should then provide him with a bullet point report of the changes they want made. The Commission can discuss everyone's changes/comments at their regular meeting in May. He may even do a press release to invite people to join in the group discussions. Ms. Holliday suggested that they announce that the Commission is planning to update the Plan at the Open House on May 31st, and if anyone is interested in participating to let them know. She stated that the panel for the Open House might include a representative from Landmarks Illinois and Elizabeth Blasius from Preservation Futures in Chicago. So, there will be people at the Open House that do work on updating preservation plans, so it might be an opportunity to jump start the public piece. Mr. Ricci said hopefully this will happen after the group discussions have happened.

Mr. Roberts inquired about the Open House. Ms. Holliday said it is an event for the exhibition, "Making Place for the Arts at Home", that she and Mr. Hays worked on. The Open House focuses on mid-century modern architecture in Champaign and Urbana. She said that one of the public events associated with the exhibition is a morning symposium discussing preservation challenges associated with mid-century modern architecture. The morning panel will have representatives who deal in historic preservation across the State of Illinois speaking to the issue of encouraging a greater degree of engagement in preservation of modern properties here specifically. The afternoon piece is the Open House, where four houses will be open for tours. While this event is not an event of the Historic Preservation Commission, it is an opportunity to have a large public audience to talk about modern houses and preservation and to encourage their participation in a conversation about our preservation plan.

He wondered if it would be appropriate for the Historic Preservation Commission to have a presentation for the public of where the Commission stands and is going as a commission. We could hold the presentation in the auditorium at the Urbana Free Library or somewhere that would be a typical place where a community meets to learn about projects within our city. Chair Urban said that she likes the idea; however, the Commission may not be ready to make a presentation by then. It does seem like a good time to drum up people that are interested in being part of the process. Mr. Ricci stated that he could arrange to have a table at the Market at the Square, and Commission members could have the public complete an online survey to get feedback on how important the public thinks historic preservation is. Chair Urban likes this idea. She said Commission members could help man the table at the Market.

Chair Urban said that the Commission may not meet in May, so she encouraged the Commission members to help get the Open House on May 31st advertised.

Mr. Hays said that he likes the idea of the Commission members pairing up to look at the 1998 Historic Preservation Plan and discuss how the Plan is structured, why it was structured that way, and what changes they would like to see in a new plan. If we do this work before we engage the public, then the Commission can be much more responsive to their suggestions.

Ms. Holliday mentioned that if someone wants to learn more, there is a group called the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC). They have a ton of information for people who want to update their historic preservation plans. They have sample plans, sample timelines and processes for updating plans. They are a great resource for not only looking at a plan that is 25 years old, but also looking at what other recent plans are looking at. She said that she would very much be in favor at some point in the process of the Commission updating our Historic Preservation Plan reaching out to this organization to see what their guidelines are for a city of our size in particular and to find out what kind of ordinances are typical. Mr. Ricci pointed out that the City of Urbana's Historic Preservation Commission is a member of NAPC. NAPC holds a lot of webinars that the Commission members are allowed to attend for free. NAPC has a great list serve that the City of Urbana could reach out to.

Chair Urban asked the Commission members if they are interested in working in groups to review and provide comments on the 1998 Historic Preservation Plan as discussed earlier. Mr. Weiss said he is in favor of it. Chair Urban suggested that the Commission members choose a Commission member buddy, meet with their buddy to discuss the existing plan, and start pulling some examples of other cities' plans or samples from the NAPC to discuss with their buddy. Mr. Ricci said that if the Commission members share other plans with him, he would make them available for other Commission members to view by putting them on Google Drive. If they find broken links to examples they are interested in looking at, then if they do not have time to reach out to that community, then let him know and he will.

Mr. Hays stated that there will be no meeting in April, and he cannot attend the May 7, 2025 regular meeting. Mr. Ricci said that staff can take a poll of who can attend the May meeting. If there will not be a quorum, then they cannot have a meeting. Staff will take a poll of different dates to hold a special meeting and let the Commission members know.

The Commission members present discussed buddies. Mr. Weiss and Mr. Roberts will be partners. Chair Urban and Mr. Hays will be partners. Mr. Shepard and Ms. O'Donnell will be partners. Mr. Ricci assigned Susan Appel to pair up with Chair Urban and Mr. Hays. He paired Phyllis Winters-Williams with Mr. Shepard and Ms. O'Donnell.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Ricci asked Ms. Holliday to give a recap of the details for the Open House on May 31, 2025, so she did.

Phyllis Winters-Williams mentioned that Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA), Chris Enck, and Brian Adams will be celebrating the 120th anniversary of the building of the Joseph

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Royer's home and the 100th anniversary of the publication of "Fairy Book" by Adelaide Royer and illustrated by her sister, Nell Brooker Mayhew, on Sunday, May 4, 2025 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Kim Sanford will be Aunt Boog and tell stories to children. People will be able to decorate their own fairy garden door for kids. There will also be tours with a special emphasis on the dining room of the Royer House because of the murals that Ms. Mayhew made. Anyone interested does not need to pre-register. Chair Urban said this is a great way to kick off Historic Preservation Month.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Urban adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marcus Ricci". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Marcus Ricci, AICP
Historic Preservation Commission Secretary