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**DATE:** Monday, November 25, 2024  
**TIME:** 7:00 p.m.  
**PLACE:** 400 S. Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801

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The City Council of the City of Urbana, Illinois, met in regular session Monday, November 25, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

**ELECTED OFFICIALS PHYSICALLY PRESENT:** Diane Wolfe Marlin, Mayor; CM Maryalice Wu, CM Christopher Evans, CM Shirese Hursey\*, CM Chaundra Bishop, CM Grace Wilken, CM James Quisenberry

**\*CM PRESENT REMOTELY**

**ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT:** Darcy Sandefur, City Clerk; CM Jaya Kolisetty

**STAFF PRESENT:** Bridget Broihahn, Bourema Ouedraogo, Demond Dade, Carla Boyd, Will Kolschowsky, Seok Hyun Cho, Chad Baxley, Jacob Dalton, Jeremy Eads, Joshua Fitzsimmons, Roy Lane, Richard Hershberger, Andrea Ruedi, Rachel McLean, Tal Prendergast, Carol Mitten, Matt Roeschley, Troy Roberts, Trent Short

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Carly McCrory-McKay, Executive Director of Champaign County Economic Development Corporation; Jordan Landeck, Marketing & Events Director of Champaign County Economic Development Corporation; Ann Panthen, Chair of the Urbana Human Relations Commission

### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

With a quorum present, Mayor Marlin called the meeting of the Urbana City Council to order at 7:00p.m.

### 2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

#### a. 11-12-2024 Committee of the Whole Minutes

Motion to approve by CM Wu, seconded by CM Bishop.

Voice Vote:

**AYE:** Wu, Evans, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

**NAY:** None.

### 3. Additions to the Agenda

Motion to add a Discussion item regarding the Alternative Response Task Force before Adjournment by CM Wilken, seconded by CM Evans.

Voice Vote:

**AYE:** Wu, Evans, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

**NAY:** None.

#### 4. Presentations and Public Input

##### a. Fire Department Swearing-In and Promotions

Demond Dade, Fire Chief presented the promotions of the following individuals: Chad Baxley, Firefighter; Jacob Dalton, Firefighter; Jeremy Eads, Firefighter; Joshua Fitzsimmons, Lieutenant; Richard Hershberger, Firefighter; Roy Lane, Battalion Chief; Rachel McLean, Firefighter; Tal Prendergast, Deputy Chief; Troy Roberts, Captain; and Trent Short, Battalion Chief.

Introduced Tal Prendergast, Deputy Chief and spoke on his 16 years of service with the Urbana Fire Department, the certifications, and positions he has earned throughout his career. Tal Prendergast was pinned by his daughter, Emma and sworn in by Mayor Marlin.

Introduced Trent Short, Battalion Chief and Roy Lane, Battalion Chief. Spoke on their years of service and their respective achievements. Trent Short was pinned by his wife Jodie, Roy Lane was pinned by his wife Melissa after being sworn in by Mayor Marlin.

Introduced Troy Roberts, Captain and spoke on his 26 years of service with the Urbana Fire Department and his roles within the department. Troy Roberts was pinned by his wife, Nicki after being sworn in by Mayor Marlin.

Introduced Joshua Fitzsimmons, Lieutenant and spoke on his 8 years of service with the Urbana Fire Department as well as his roles held within the department. Joshua Fitzsimmons was pinned by his son, Hayden after being sworn in by Mayor Marlin.

Introduced Firefighters Jacob Dalton, Jeremy Eads, Rachel McLane, Chad Baxley, and Richard Hershberger. Shared their experience with the Urbana Fire Department and their qualifications. Jacob Dalton was pinned by his wife, Andrea; Jeremy Eads was pinned by his fiancée, Jody; Rachel McClane was pinned by her father, Mark; Chad Baxley was pinned by his wife, Sarah; and Richard Hershberger was pinned by his Battalion Chief, Roy Lane after they all were sworn in by Mayor Marlin.

Shared Steve Doggett, Deputy Chief; Brian Hoff, Lieutenant; Josh Ingold, Lieutenant; Nick Jarvis, Lieutenant; and Drake Todd also received promotions to their current positions, but were unable to attend tonight.

##### b. Annual Presentation from Champaign County Economic Development Corporation

Presented by Carly McCrory-McKay, Executive Director of Champaign County Economic Development Corporation. Carly McCrory-McKay provided background on the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and their areas of focus in supporting the growth of the local economy. Shared the example of collaborating with APL (originally Anderson Physics Laboratory) on promoting their recent 80-year anniversary of their business in addition to connecting them with various resources to help expand their business. Elaborated further on their recent collaborations and business engagement efforts at the local, regional, and state level. Stated businesses have signaled that talent attraction is one of their highest priorities and spoke on the engagement received on their Champaign-Urbana Area Job Board and their Champaign-Urbana Community Job Application programs. Shared their success from their Chamabana Welcome Crew, New to CU Mixers, and University of Illinois – New Faculty Community Tour programs on increasing local engagement while further helping attract talent to the area through tailoring the programs to the needs of local businesses. Stated local successes are being highlighted through their Chamabana Proud Podcast that they host weekly.

Spoke on their Agriculture-Tech industry centric programming as it is a sector that has observed significant growth and interest that draws companies to the Champaign County area. Shared details and announced new programming for the 6th Annual Celebration of the Champaign-Urbana AgTech Week taking place from March 3rd to March 7th in 2025. Provided information on the iFAB (Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing) Tech Hub designation and the funding application process for federal funds. Stated intent to help in shaping the region, comprised of the Champaign, Piatt, and Macon counties, as the global leader in Bioprocessing and Precision Fermentation. Stated the EDC is trying to address the lack of fermentation infrastructure which hinders the expansion of the precision fermentation industry in Illinois to better compete with other regions in the United States where the infrastructure does exist. Spoke on the timeline of events that led to being designated as a Tech Hub by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration at the highest possible funding level of \$51,000,000. Stated despite the large amount of funding received, it is insufficient to become the global leader in this field within the decade and the EDC will continue to work toward bringing more funding and resources in to realize this goal. Stated the \$51,000,000 will be allocated toward four projects comprised of three precision fermentation infrastructure additions and one project to manage the iFAB Hub. Stated a Business Attraction Manager will be hired under the iFAB Hub Management project to work alongside the EDC to identify and help establish sites for the precision fermentation infrastructure improvement projects. Stated the expansion of the Integrated Bioprocessing Research Lab at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is one of the infrastructure projects to increase service capacity for greater company attraction.

Shared information regarding the Community Navigator Program which provided outreach and technical assistance to small businesses within the region to access federal, state, and local funding through recovery grants. Stated the most recent Back to Business NewBiz Program distributed \$70,000 to four businesses in the City of Urbana, but since 2021 the Community Navigator Program has helped businesses in Urbana receive \$5,188,466.

Shared the EDC has been able to hire three new team members: Beatriz Ramirez, International Trade Center Specialist; Beth Patterson, SBDC Advisor; and Keli Krueger-Huhra, Director of the Illinois APEX Accelerator. Spoke on the APEX Accelerator program conducted in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the University of Illinois that aids businesses in marketing products and services to government agencies. Stated Keli Krueger-Huhra is also available to assist government bodies in their procurement process as well through the APEX Accelerator program. Shared engagement data from the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC), operated by the EDC, noting that 64 clients in the City of Urbana have been assisted between January 2024 and October 2024.

Motion to extend presentation time by 5 minutes by CM Wilken, seconded by CM Wu.

Stated through having SBDC host 69 training events between January 2024 and October 2024, 760 attendees were recorded and taught how to start a business in Illinois, how to write a business plan, and various other business training topics.

Shared future plans and touched on the former Dart Property, stating it is still available for purchase or lease and the EDC are fielding inquiries and questions. Stated over 80% of the employees from Dart were able to be retained in the county and CKS Packaging, located in the City of Urbana, has hired 20 of the impacted employees. Stated the EDC continue to work with Willard Airport to develop their air services and conversations are continued to be held with airlines as conditions in the general airline sector are improving. Questions and discussion followed.

**c. Human Relations Commission Report Pursuant to City Code Chapter 12 Section 12-22 (g)**

Presented by Carla Boyd, Human Rights & Equity Officer and Ann Panthen, Chair of the Urbana Human Relations Commission. Ann Panthen provided background on the report regarding a complaint on discrimination connected to the Hope Village Project. Carla Boyd stated a 12-22 (g) report is when a community member has a complaint regarding an employee of the City that is directly forwarded to the Human Relations Commission for investigation. Ann Panthen stated the written complaint was received in August 2024 and the investigation was conducted over 90 days by herself which involved speaking to the City Administrator, Champaign County Health Care Consumers, North End United Neighborhood Group, residents of the Carver Park Neighborhood, the Principal Planner at the City of Urbana, and the Zoning Administrator at the City of Urbana. Stated all sets of meeting minutes mentioning Hope Village were read and many video recordings of the meetings were viewed to observe the statements of the residents and the responses from the City. Stated news reports regarding the matter were also considered. Stated residents presented concerns regarding traffic, drainage, the potential for property tax increases, the potential for a decrease in property value, and noise from responder vehicles. Stated those who led the project made many efforts and changes to the project to address the concerns brought by the neighborhood. Stated Carver Park residents attended at least 18 City meetings to speak on their concerns in addition to the meetings held within the community. Stated the investigation found the City did not have any lack of effort in trying to address the concerns brought forward by the residents and concluded there was insufficient evidence to support the claim of violating the Human Rights Ordinance.

**d. Public Input**

*Paul Mewth* empathized with the concerns shared by the residents from the Carver Park subdivision and those in the surrounding communities regarding the development of Hope Village. Stated support for the grocery store proposal in Ward 3, noting it has the potential to aid both current residents and future Hope Village residents. Stated food deserts and food apartheid are due to structural failures and racism. Stated the North End of Urbana needs to be further invested in. Stated the City's current fiscal circumstances should provide enough room to find the funding to support the grocery store proposal to improve public health. *Annie Adams* expressed hope for residents of Ward 3 to someday be celebrating the 50th birthday of the Heartstrong Grocery Store proposed by Angela Bradley. Thanked the City's leadership for their fiscal stewardship of the ARPA funds. Voiced support for the proposed grocery store in Ward 3 and stated it has been long overdue. *Melinda Carr* stated the voices of residents from Carver Park and surrounding neighborhoods have been historically stifled and they have received inequitable treatment through the investigation into their concerns on Hope Village. Stated the residents were not given an opportunity to respond to the report as the original email was not sent out from the draft folder by the Chair of the Human Relations Commission before the last meeting on the final report held by the Human Relations Commission on November 19th. Stated the email was received tonight on November 25th and none of the community was able to review it before tonight. Pointed out the report contains inaccuracies on meeting dates, and it has been further detailed in the email that she had sent to Council.

*Written Public Input were received from the following individuals and read by Mayor Marlin: Dua Aldasouqi, Liz Cardman. Written Public Input were received from the following individuals, but were not read: Melinda Carr, Carmen Blubaugh.*

## 5. Council Input and Communications

*CM Wilken* stated she has not yet seen a written report from the Human Relations Commission on the concerns regarding Hope Village. Requested further clarification on if there is a written report of the presentation that was shared tonight from the Human Relations Commission and requested it be shared with Council and be publicly available. *Carla Boyd, Human Rights and Equity Officer* stated the written report does exist and was only required to be submitted to the Mayor but can be provided to Council. *CM Wu* stated, from a meeting attended on Friday November 22nd at the Regional Planning Commission (RPC), she noted the County has failed to file financial documents by their due date in September and have not yet filed them which has caused the regional LIHEAP program to be at threat of halting unless the County provides them a loan. Stated the documents are slated to be filed by the 20th of December. Expressed concern regarding the RPC's ability to be eligible for grants due to the County's failure to file documents to federal and State departments on time. *CM Bishop* shared the Urbana Park District's Health and Wellness Center at 2002 East Washington Street has an opening date for the 6th of January 2025. Stated the yearly membership rate seemed to be \$125 and encouraged people to utilize the new facility. *CM Quisenberry* stated the Health and Wellness Center will also offer scholarship rates to those who qualify and those interested should check with the Urbana Park District. *Mayor Marlin* stated for those who would like to see the Health and Wellness Center early, it will be open tomorrow on the 26th of November from 3:30p.m. to 6:30p.m. and on Wednesday from 3:30p.m. to 6:00p.m. they will also be selling memberships. Stated OSF Heart of Mary has partnered with the Urbana Park District to provide \$150,000 over a 5-year agreement period to support memberships for low-income families. Stated the Urbana High School students and PTSA are sponsoring the annual Thanksgiving Community Dinner at Urbana High School from 4:00p.m. to 6:00p.m. on Thanksgiving Day which will be free and open to the public. Announced the City of Urbana will be launching its new website on December 13th and has been two years in the making.

## 6. Reports of Standing Committees

None.

## 7. Committee of the Whole (*Council Member Maryalice Wu, Ward 1*)

### 1. Consent Agenda

- a. **Resolution No. 2024-11-074R:** A Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of a DCEO Community Development Block – Coronavirus Grant (CDBG-CV) – CD

This Resolution authorizes the City to accept a \$1,200,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for the Hope Village Tiny Homes Project.

- b. **Resolution No. 2024-11-075R:** A Resolution Approving a CDBG-CV Subrecipient Grant Agreement with Hope Village Inc. – CD

This Resolution approves a subrecipient grant agreement between the City and Hope Village Inc.

- c. **Resolution No. 2024-11-076R:** A Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of a DCEO Grant (Hope Village) – CD

This Resolution authorizes the City to accept a \$250,000 grant from the DCEO for the Hope Village Tiny Homes project.

- d. **Resolution No. 2024-11-077R:** A Resolution Approving a Subrecipient Grant Agreement with Hope Village, Inc. – CD

This Resolution approves a subrecipient grant agreement between the City and Hope Village, Inc.

- e. **Resolution No. 2024-11-078R:** A Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of a DCEO Grant (Urbana Pilot Fleet Electrification Program) – CD

This Resolution authorizes the City to accept a \$250,000 grant from the DCEO for the Pilot Fleet Electrification Project to be undertaken by Public Works.

Motion to approve by CM Wu, seconded by CM Bishop.

Roll Call Vote:

**AYE:** Wu, Evans, Bishop, Wilken

**NAY:** Quisenberry

## 2. Regular Agenda

- a. **Ordinance No. 2024-11-036:** An Ordinance Revising the Annual Budget Ordinance (Budget Amendment #2 – Omnibus) – HRF

This Ordinance seeks to amend the FY2025 Annual Budget to provide additional funding for the City’s recycling programs, reallocate funds for the Community Engagement Team Pilot Program, allocate grant funds for Hope Village, and fund a study on fire protection services in the campus area.

Motion to approve by CM Wu, seconded by CM Quisenberry. Questions and discussion followed.

- i. Motion to divide the question to consider the items regarding the Community Engagement Team separately by CM Wilken.
- ii. Motion to defer consideration of this item to the December 9th City Council by CM Wu, seconded by CM Bishop.

CM Wu stated the item should be considered later due to two members being unable to attend tonight’s meeting.

Council reached consensus on deferring consideration of this item to the December 9th City Council meeting.

## 8. Reports of Special Committees

None.

## 9. Reports of Officers

None.

## 10. New Business

- a. **Resolution No. 2024-11-079R:** A Resolution Approving Matching Funds for the Illinois Grocery Initiative (Heartstrong Meals, LLC) – Exec

Introduction was provided by Carol Mitten, City Administrator. This Resolution seeks to provide up to \$800,000 of matching funds as part of an application by Heartstrong Meals, LLC to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) concerning new grocery stores in food deserts. The Resolution also commits the City to make available its property located in 1407 North Lincoln Avenue for the project. Carol Mitten recounted the presentation made by Angela Bradley, CEO of Heartstrong Meals during the November 12th Committee of the Whole meeting where \$800,000 was requested to match funds to apply for a State grant to support the grocery store proposal. Provided background on the Resolution being presented today and how it was formed with Council input and consideration. Stated Mayor Marlin, Councilmember Hursey, herself, and other City staff members met with Angela Bradley on Friday, November 22nd and had a productive conversation regarding the grocery store proposal and how to best support its future success. Questions and discussion followed.

Motion to approve by CM Wu, seconded by CM Bishop.

Roll Call Vote:

**AYE:** Wu, Evans, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

**NAY:** None.

## 11. Mayoral Appointments

- a. **Mayoral Appointments to Boards and Commissions**

### *Urbana Tree Commission*

– Justin Vozzo (term ending June 30, 2027)

Mayor Marlin introduced the candidate and spoke on his merits and accomplishments.

Motion to approve by CM Wilken, seconded by CM Quisenberry.

Roll Call Vote:

**AYE:** Wu, Evans, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

**NAY:** None.

## 12. Discussion

- a. **Alternative Response Task Force Update**

Presented by Will Kolschowsky, Senior Management Analyst / Assistant to the City Administrator. Provided answers to the questions CM Wilken had sent earlier to City staff. Stated \$55,100 is available in unspent funds from the contract with BerryDunn that Council can

elect to use toward a new facilitator and the FY25 budget also contained additional funds for alternative response. Stated the process for finding another facilitator will involve the City's typical procurement process and having a Request for Proposal (RFP) once the City finalizes the scope of work to detail the responsibilities, tasks, and deliverables expected from the facilitator. Stated the previous RFP will need to be updated to match the current state of progress of the project. Stated a project team will also be put together, which will include 1-2 Councilmembers, to help establish the scope of work, review proposals, and assist in the implementation process with the selected facilitator. Stated a draft scope of work will be shared with Council for feedback before issuing an RFP.

Council asked and discussed the timeline and process of developing an RFP. Will Kolschowsky stated the development of an RFP varies and can depend on the number of revisions required. CM Wilken expressed willingness to assist in the development of the RFP alongside willing community members and shared a feeling of disheartenment upon hearing it has not already been in the process of being developed.

Council asked regarding the discrepancy between the budgeted amount for BerryDunn compared to the amount of remaining funds. Will Kolschowsky stated the billing from BerryDunn was monthly and based on the work conducted to complete a deliverable. Stated the staffing study deliverable had been completed and partial work had been done on the alternate response review deliverable. Mayor Marlin stated BerryDunn had conducted background work on the alternate response task force which included surveying task force organizations to see what services they are able to provide in preparation for convening the task force meetings. CM Wilken requested that information be made available to the task force so that it can be utilized in future discussions. Mayor Marlin stated all compiled information from BerryDunn will be shared to the City for the new facilitator to review and use.

Council asked when they would be able to get a first-look at the RFP. Will Kolschowsky stated it will be available as soon as possible after the Thanksgiving break for Council to view as it is a Council priority.

Council asked if contacting Will Kolschowsky for providing input and feedback would be the best avenue to do so. Will Kolschowsky confirmed that Council input can be sent to him regarding the RFP. Mayor Marlin requested for 1 to 2 Councilmembers, who are not already participating in the task force, to volunteer for the project team. CM Bishop volunteered and CM Wilken tentatively volunteered depending on logistics.

### **13. Adjournment**

With no further business before the Urbana City Council, Mayor Marlin adjourned the meeting at 8:48p.m.

Seok Hyun Cho

Deputy City Clerk

This meeting was video recorded and is viewable [on-demand HERE](#).

**Minutes approved: 1/13/25**

## Cho, Seok Hyun 'Rafael'

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**From:** Carmen Blubaugh <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 19, 2024 8:00 AM  
**To:** !City Council  
**Subject:** PUBLIC INPUT zoning ordinance

**\*\*\* Email From An External Source \*\*\***

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Dear Council Members,

Hi again.

I really enjoyed learning more about local government tonight! Thanks for all the interesting work you're doing (and for working so late into the night!). I didn't have an opinion about the zoning ordinance until I heard the initial presentation from Mr. Huber tonight, so I thought I would share my more articulated thoughts in case it is a useful perspective.

I fervently agree with council members Bishop and Wilken that densifying Urbana downtown and close to campus is key in making it accessible for all. Generally, I'm an enthusiastic 'yes in my backyard' and a proud neighbor to multi-family units, and I agree that zoning rules should be uniformly applied city-wide. However, I fear that the most likely outcome of this particular zoning amendment for duplexes will further threaten the last remaining 'starter homes' in Urbana- which are truly an endangered species. When I was trying to buy a house under \$150k last year, I made six offers and was beaten out several times by investors with all-cash offers before a seller finally had mercy on me. I was disappointed and frustrated for so long and almost surrendered my dream of homeownership after 10 years of saving.

If the tiny narrow lots (which happen to be concentrated in the oldest parts of the city) become easy to duplexify, the most affordable historic fixer-uppers in town will become even more lucrative for developers to scoop up, demolish, and replace with expensive duplex rentals. I would love to see us get more creative with how we densify so that it doesn't come at the cost of the last remaining starter homes in town. Here are some alternative (and perhaps crazy) ideas that would increase opportunities for both renters and new homeowners:

- 1) YIMBY to modifying/subdividing ostentatious mansions into condos and/or rentable units.
- 2) YIMBY to setback exemptions to enable subdividing long corner lots to accommodate small homes
- 3) YIMBY to four-plexes or six-plexes on existing empty lots or in unused parking lots downtown (for example, at Illinois & Broadway)
- 4) YIMBY to housing units in Lincoln Square Mall.

Carmen Blubaugh

On Mon, Nov 18, 2024 at 11:13 AM Carmen Blubaugh <[REDACTED]> wrote:  
Greetings,

I would like to voice support for a local match for a state grant to establish a grocery store on Urbana's North end. While corporate grocery developers may not agree that all people deserve walkable access to healthy food, I know that many in our community do. Ms. Bradley has a long list of partners and suppliers that will make Heartstrong Grocery a lynch pin in the local food community, and provide new access to healthy produce that does not currently exist anywhere in Urbana. I would be proud to mobilize Urbana community members, U of I students, and extension resources to support the long-term prosperity of a new local grocery store. Heartland Grocery will improve long-term food access on the North End and will also establish new market shares for current and aspiring farmers in Central Illinois. This is a core part of the land-grant mission and I expect that many of my colleagues in the College of Agriculture will share my commitment to expanding food access in our hometown.

I plan to attend tonight's meeting, and hope to make my voice heard there in-person.

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Carmen Blubaugh

[REDACTED]

Urbana, IL

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Carmen Blubaugh

## Cho, Seok Hyun 'Rafael'

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**From:** E R Cardman <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 24, 2024 7:55 AM  
**To:** !City Council  
**Subject:** City Council: Nov 25, 2024: PUBLIC INPUT PLEASE READ: Ordinance No. 2024-11-034

**\*\*\* Email From An External Source \*\*\***

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Dear City Council:

I ask that you vote against Ordinance No. 2024-11-034: An Ordinance Amending the Urbana Zoning Ordinance (Update Section VI-3 for Clarity and to Remove Additional Lot Area and Width Requirements for Certain Uses.

I have two critical points for the Council to consider:

- 1) *Why is City Council considering a significant revision to the zoning code when a major rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan is underway?*

Response: **Major revisions would be best done after the new Comp Plan can guide these changes. One developer, however well-intentioned, is driving this resolution, not the Comprehensive Plan. That contradicts sensible planning practices.**

- 2) *Given all the neighborhoods and HOAs in Urbana, why are the folks of only one neighborhood so vocally opposed to this resolution?*

Answer: **Because West Urbana has the most to lose. West Urbana is 'beachfront' property with its proximity to campus and given any opening, developers are ready to build there.**

## Summary:

Opening up West Urbana to more properties does not mean more sustainable. It does not mean more equitable. It does not mean more affordable. It does mean a higher tax base, if that is your true objective. At least be honest about that.

## Facts:

### **West Urbana has a great diversity in housing stock, including high density housing:**

Contrary to public opinion, West Urbana is not overwhelmed with single-family housing. Consider that in the area from Main to Florida and Lincoln to Race, over 100 single family houses and a few duplexes have been razed in the last 35 years or so. While some demolished lots have become parking lots, or contributed to the Leal School and Urbana Free Library expansions, most have become high-density housing for students.

Urbana is awash in rentals, as has been documented numerous times.

West Urbana does have a diversity in housing types: boarding houses, single-family, duplexes, 3-7 units, R-7 university 'group houses,' and high-density apartment buildings. The one type of housing it does lack, however, is the equivalent of high-end housing in the outlying areas which sell for over \$1 million.

Also note these large developments in West Urbana since 1985: Nevada & Lincoln; 603 S Busey [Europa House]; 804 W Illinois; 707 W Springfield; 1002 S Lincoln; and too many properties along Green and Elm streets to list. There are also nearby developments that affect the feel and quality of West Urbana: two at Lincoln & University; Lincoln & Western; two at Gregory Place.

**National trends in planning for ‘smart towns’ do not necessarily play out in the same way when applied to a small college town.** There are nuances in these trends which have real implications for Urbana that need to be acknowledged:

**Increasing density in West Urbana will not promote sustainable development.**

Much development in West Urbana is driven by outside financial drivers and not local feel-good policies:

The construction market in college towns does not invite sustainable developments in many neighborhoods. Rather, it invites entry of a highly profitable real estate sector: development of student housing, driven by national and international investors who have no interest in local social issues or quality of life. Note: Students want new. *“The industry is shedding its image as a niche business run by local landlords and instead drawing more institutional and global investors.”* [New York Times, February 13, 2024 “Student Housing Has a New Mantra: Bigger Is Better.” Note: the online comments section. [https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/13/business/student-housing-off-campus-real-estate.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=1.JU4.Mnef.PtS4RYoqo8oP&smid=url-share](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/13/business/student-housing-off-campus-real-estate.html?unlocked_article_code=1.JU4.Mnef.PtS4RYoqo8oP&smid=url-share)] [Also see: <https://cu-citizenaccess.org/2018/02/federal-housing-analysis-says-champaign-rental-market-oversaturated-but-city-continues-to-approve-development/> ]

Residents, whether renters or families, will still have cars. A Leal School crossing guard at Race and Oregon reported recently that she now oversees only six children walking to school; only 4 of those are unescorted. The neighborhood school is vanishing; chauffeuring children is common. Cars flood the area near my home at drop-off and pick-up times. Further, all of Urbana is easily accessible to the campus. It takes only 10 minutes to commute to campus from Stone Creek versus 3 minutes from West Urbana (or a ‘whopping’ 13 minutes from SW Champaign) – a trivial difference.

Increasing density against the wishes of those who are working couples with children, and forcing them to migrate to neighborhoods with 2- and 3-car garages on the fringes of CU with relatively trivial commutes is not promoting ‘sustainability.’

**Increasing density in West Urbana will not promote affordable housing.**

New will always rent higher over rundown old. You will not get more affordable housing aimed at permanent residents or transitory ones.

*“The best thing Champaign has for affordability is just older buildings, and keeping older buildings in service as long as possible is a critical component to promote the affordability of housing supply.”* Further: *“affordable units need to be subsidized if they’re going to be offered at less than market rate.”* [News-Gazette, August 21, 2024: “Development plan amended; affordability concerns remain.” ] [https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/housing/royse-and-brinkmeyer-amends-plans-for-new-complex-but-concerns-remain/article\\_0ba5bb7c-568e-11ef-85c3-af6b5a5638bd.html](https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/housing/royse-and-brinkmeyer-amends-plans-for-new-complex-but-concerns-remain/article_0ba5bb7c-568e-11ef-85c3-af6b5a5638bd.html) ]

As has been repeatedly shared with City Council, affordable housing will only come with significant local, state and federal subsidies.

Decreasing the number of modest single-family homes for duplexes will actually result in FEWER affordable, entry-level homes for first-time buyers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Liz Cardman

Ward 1

**Cho, Seok Hyun 'Rafael'**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 24, 2024 3:52 PM  
**To:** !City Council  
**Subject:** Public Input 11.25: More Transparency

**\*\*\* Email From An External Source \*\*\***

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Hello,

Please read my comment out loud.

My name is Dua Aldasouqi, I am a member of the CU Muslim Action Committee. I was asking for follow up on the Berry Dunn report as well as the alternative task force. It is my understanding that the BD report was not completed and the contract with the consultant has ended. How much of the contract was completed? How much payment was received/remains from the contract? What will happen next? We look forward to continued transparency in this process from the council.

Thank you,  
Dua

**Cho, Seok Hyun 'Rafael'**

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**From:** Melinda Carr <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 25, 2024 6:26 PM  
**To:** !City Council  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** PUBLIC INPUT – NOVEMBER 25, 2024 - PLEASE READ INTO THE PUBLIC RECORD  
**Attachments:** Urbana City Council letter\_July 8, 2024.pdf; Email to Urbana City Council Regarding UHRC Final Report on November 25 2024.docx

**\*\*\* Email From An External Source \*\*\***

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Dear Mayor Marlin and Members of the Urbana City Council

Regarding: Agenda Item D. 3. Human Relations Commission Report Pursuant to City Code Chapter 12 Section 12-22 (g)

Attached is a rebuttal for the above-referenced agenda item at tonight's meeting. Five minutes will not be enough time to read this information, and we were not given sufficient time to review the final report as indicated in the message. We hope that you will be voting with a heart to do the right thing tonight.

Pastor Melinda Carr, Interim President  
On behalf of North End United

November 25, 2024

Dear Mayor Marlin and Members of the Urbana City Council

Regarding: Agenda Item D. 3. Human Relations Commission Report Pursuant to City Code Chapter 12 Section 12-22 (g)

## **INEQUITABLE TREATMENT IN THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION INVESTIGATION PROCESS**

The formal complaint of Residents of Carver Park and surrounding neighborhoods of both Urbana and Champaign, a small historically African American neighborhood, was presented in person to the Human Relations Commission publicly on August 20, 2024, because our voices have been stifled as a pattern and we have come publicly because of that, and we have experienced inequitable treatment throughout the investigation process.

Seventeen complainants were listed, although there was a spokesperson, and others made public comments during that meeting (listed below under Other Witnesses/Testimonies) and their signatures are on the complaint. Those who were present in person included Melinda Carr (spokesperson), Jacqueline Curry (standing with the spokesperson), Leroy Dee (sitting in back), Marion Harrington (sitting in back), Rev. Dr. Evelyn Underwood, Bishop King James Underwood. The second page listed the four main contacts (explained publicly at the August 20 meeting). Three live in Carver Park and one is a neighboring resident. Other complainants were Carver Park residents, neighboring residents or concerned citizens.

### **Other Witnesses/Testimonies On August 20, 2024**

Videos: [Human Relations Commission Meeting - Tuesday, August 20, 2024](#)

**Marion Harrington (signed the complaint):** Lives in Crispus Attucks subdivision near the Carver Park subdivision. He said this, "project was dropped on our lap." "There were 17 other locations that this project could have been put at, but they chose not to do it. So instead of getting with the neighborhood and presenting this to the neighborhood they went ahead and bought the land and started the project and then tell us what they're going to do in our neighborhood. No involvement and nothing to be done about it. So we got together and decided that we were not going to take that laying down. So in a nutshell, we're not against the project, we're not against the homeless. We just don't want this project accessed through our neighborhood. That's all we're pretty much asking and no one seems to want to listen to us. They keep on pursuing the project and they're going to let the project--it's going to increase foot traffic, it's going to increase vehicle traffic and if you've ever been up in Carver Drive, you need to take a look and see what they're trying to do to us. And it's just not feasible. So we're just asking if we can just be heard and not access our neighborhood."

**Leroy Dee (signed the complaint):** Lives right in Carver Park Subdivision where everything is happening. “I raised my kids there. It was a dead end and they played and everything, and the kids are out there now playing. With emergency vehicles coming through and everything, kids could be out their playing with a ball or whatever. I just think Hope Village needs their own entryway. Like everyone is saying, we’re not against it. It’s all the foot traffic and all the cars and everything. My grandson catches the bus through there. The bus can’t even get down that far because of the small drive they’ve got, so I have to walk my grandson to the corner so the bus can get around there. And we’re talking about more traffic with this going on and they’re not doing anything to help us or the streets.” At the October 5, 2023 Community forum held by the applicant, Leroy Dee spoke about the water shut off where residents did not receive prior notification and complained about cloudy looking water. Following the October 5, 2023, Community forum, the residents had to demand time to speak and still their concerns were not addressed as outline in a November 8, 2023, letter to city officials that the Chair should have in her possession.

### **Tuesday, November 19, 2024 – FINAL REPORT from Human Relations Chair**

In the final public meeting on Tuesday, November 19, the Chair of the Urbana Relations Commission stated that she submitted the final report to the Commissioners, Mayor and listed only one of the complainants who was publicly acknowledged as Melinda Carr and the Chair stated the email did not bounce back. The Chair of the Commission made a unilateral decision to interfere with the process by removing the names of the individuals who were stated and listed in the complaint and those she had been corresponding with by email. Jacqueline Curry (stood next to the spokesperson on August 20 when presenting the complaint to the Human Relations Commission). Jacqueline has been attending in person since the very first hearing on June 22, 2023, where she spoke before the Plan Commission.

The named complainant, Melinda Carr, was not aware of the stated email being sent five (5) days before the meeting and therefore, none of the complainants had access to the final report and were not able to make a rebuttal before the Commissioners voted on November 19, 2024.

Another act of inequity was when one of the Commissioners arrived very late and had to be called to make a quorum. He had not read the final report and did not have electronic access to the information. He still proceeded to vote instead of abstaining and asking to table the vote since he was the deciding factor. The Chair never offered an option to table or postpone the meeting or call a special meeting, and the four commissioners voted to accept the final report without allowing the complainants input before moving it on to the Urbana City Council. The process of investigation is supposed to be equitable for the individuals filing a complaint. That’s why it was revised on March 8, 2021.

### **Zoom Meeting with Complainants on October 11, 2024**

Those present at the Zoom meeting included Debbie Roberts (first signature on the complaint and corresponded directly with the Chair providing the link to Melinda Carr), Melinda Carr, Jacqueline Curry, Rev. Dr. Evelyn Underwood, Bishop King James Underwood, and invited legal supporter Professor Richard Painter who wrote a letter on behalf of the neighboring residents and submitted it to the Urbana City Council at their July 8, 2024, meeting.

One of the critical questions at that meeting is the opportunity to review the final report before it is submitted to the Urbana City Council in case there are clarifications. This is a critical issue with the process and procedures that must be revised in Urbana City Code Chapter 12. We did not get an opportunity to review the final report before it was presented to the council, although it was stated publicly that an email was sent.

## **Summary of Complainant Allegations -- Exhibit A**

### **RESPONSE FROM COMPLAINANTS**

The alternative design by Robert Lewis was presented to the Plan Commission which is presently under review by the Illinois Attorney General's office because of alleged improprieties of the Plan Commission and the alteration of the agenda excluding the input of the neighboring residents. This was not included in the investigation, and this was a critical issue as it relates to concerns of the African American community. The results of the state have not come back yet and how can you make a decision without their review? The information in the design was excluded as a significant part of our concern and it involves legal oppression. In order for your consultation to be accurate, the information must be included. You infer it does not exist, but it does. Additionally, the utilization of a traffic study that acknowledged the age of the road utilized should not have been included. That would have been the traffic study of 2018. If you need a civil engineer, we suggest you call them instead of an attorney to understand the significance of that study. You have exacerbated the problem by not including the items we're concerned about in your report. The section stated not to violate the neighboring residents' space is in the city ordinance [Ordinance 2023-07-023.pdf \(urbana.il.us\)](#) Page 4, Section 1, "#2. *"The site plan is responsive to the concerns of neighboring residents"* and to do this capriciously without observing the ordinance is absurdity.

The original proposal (An Ordinance Approving a Preliminary Planned Unit Development (Hope Village - Plan Case 2476-PUD-23) had as one of its key recommendations that the final site plan take major steps to mitigate the impacts on the neighborhood to the south. That recommendation is disqualified because of the statement of not impacting the community to the south – why did they do what they did? (1.) Adversely affecting the community to the south (2) providing access through the African American community. The design was rejected because of address; it met all the qualifications of the project and what they requested in the design. They said they could do it by right, but they could not. They took over a street to satisfy their design. That should have been a red flag for the City Council. They were programmed to believe they already had a plan that worked, and that plan covered every point and complied with their plan.

### **SUMMARY OF KEY WITNESSES**

Robert Lewis, who signed the complaint and represented the neighboring residents with the alternative design proposal, was recommended for further information, but he was never contacted. Preliminary information was provided to the chair, and his information was not included in the final report.

The witnesses selected from city officials and entities connected with the Hope Village project only talked about the process and not the quality of meetings or the input of the people. You can comply with all the statistical information, number of meetings, pass out brochures and still fail to meet the

criteria and make the project inclusive to the community. The report fails to mention it started in Champaign and not Urbana. It was just going through the motions. Only a few people got notifications and, in some cases, only a few hours before the meeting took place and they relied on congregational numbers to meet their criteria, but it would be invalid because it took place in Champaign and not Urbana (Pilgrim Church in Champaign).

Some residents within the targeted area did not receive fliers. Because the fliers were not mailed, they cannot confirm the distribution reached the targeted area within 800 feet. Subsequently, requesting information from our group regarding the project, and not responding to requests in those meetings, we even had our own community meetings at Mount Olive Church in Champaign to convey information about the project and our concerns. The permit to the tiny homes started in Champaign, not Urbana. That is when you get into legal oppression. Just flowing through the process and not articulating the specifics of each meeting leaves a lot to be desired.

Specificity is important when dealing with a subject such as legal oppression. They focused on numerical data by letter, address, and notification because of where they started the project and negated the people involved. They received some information, but it was not formal in nature. Because of that, it becomes questionable as to why people are not aware of what was going on with the project. Subsequently, that's why people elected to have a formal presentation to the Plan Commission articulating all of their concerns about the site. That alternative design proposal was presented and rejected by the City Council with no recommendations. Only 10 minutes was allowed for the Council to review the drawing that was originally prepared for the Plan Commission with more expertise in this area to review and evaluate more thoroughly.

When we as community presented information, it was not accepted by the city. Our volunteer legal supporter and Professor at the University of Minnesota Law School described the city of Urbana actions as a government ethics problem and the city of Champaign was also a part of this process. (see attached letter from Professor Painter to Urbana City Council). They failed to discuss real concerns. There's accountability to what you receive and there must be a certain threshold to what you receive. We can only account for some meetings and at least one meeting was cancelled without proper notification on July 17, 2023, and there are witnesses to this fact. This was right after a neighborhood meeting on July 13, 2023, and when asked about the 17 other site locations, a representative for the project said that it was private information. Two Urbana staff members from the city of Urbana were present and they did not speak on this issue when they knew the city had provided all the locations for this project. It was not until August 24, 2023, that we learned there were 18 potential sites through email. On October 6, 2023, The News-Gazette published an article including the 17 site locations.

It was capricious for the Chair to assert that Professor Painter was not a part of our resources. His interest was by virtue of his conversations was with us. He was a Professor of Law at the University of Illinois and grew up in Urbana. His relationship with us was through his formal education in school and subsequently being a Professor of Law at the University of Illinois.

We are not against tiny homes or homeless individuals. With you talking about medically fragile people – we don't know if the buildings comply by federal law.

## **INSUFFICIENT NOTIFICATION PROCESS**

In a November 8, 2023, letter to the Plan Commission, residents identified conflicting information (two municipalities involved), requirements, and distribution. Some listings were of deceased individuals, trusts, and the process was difficult to determine the homeowner without certified mailings or other mailing verification.

This inequitable process was evident again when the residents presented a Petition of Protest on November 13, 2023. Melinda Carr was in contact with city staff. The staff member forwarded a copy of names without the addresses on them. It was a revised list of names with additions that were not on the original list that received notification from the city. Some included multiple parcel owners. As a result, Deborah Roberts talked to a staff member in the Planning Department who forwarded the original copy. On December 20, 2023, we were notified our protest petition was not valid for the Final PUD for Hope Village. However the new list was different from the original list we received and we identified conflicting information. Not all residents received proper notification of the project with a letter from the city and it was verified at the end of the protest petition process which went before the Urbana City Council on January 2, 2024. This was a part of the testimony given at this time and it's part of the public record. This is also when the Legal Oppression letter was presented, so that the pattern of inequities could be pointed out throughout the process.

## **Findings of Fact:**

### **RESPONSE FROM COMPLAINANTS**

The Plan Commission allocated time and public meetings, but the information we gathered according to their protocol was rejected by virtue of the agenda and they said our information was invalid to be presented at that time. And it was a complete analysis at that time of what we needed. A city of Urbana staff member rejected our proposal at the Plan Commission meeting. There was a proposal cut off the date from receiving their information and that information was not forwarded to the city council. There were stated requirements along with drawings of what the neighboring residents were recommending.

When they started the initial process of communicating to the community, it was unclear as to what the definition was. The building permit was for Champaign. They included members of Champaign and Urbana, which are not to be on the required list because the project is in Urbana, not Champaign. The process was confusing. We believe strongly that we have been violated and the only term we know is legal oppression, which is doing a project without due process for the neighboring residents. Unfortunately, it started in Champaign, not Urbana. Whose voices are you requesting? People in Champaign or Urbana? The property they had the permit for was applied for in Urbana. The property was brought well below the price of farmland today.

As the Chair of the Commission asserted in the summary, the changes that took place in fencing associated with the detention basin had nothing to do with the community to the south. It had to do with international code prohibiting fencing around the detention basin. To assert that this was due to improving the circumstances to the people in the south is totally absurd and by virtue of code this made the detention basin an attractive nuisance to everyone and a hazard to the children in the

neighborhood. If you had utilized the drawing from the community, this detention basin would not be at this location. It would be on the east side of the site. To assert that it came from us would be true then because we say in our proposal that fencing could be used around the facility at that time and access to the detention basin would be controlled by the owners of the Hope Village site.

In terms of chronology, the Chair of the Human Relation Commission's chronology is not accurate and ours is based on actual documents and videos. One important point of clarification is the date mentioned of June 16, 2023, which does not convey what really occurred: Our records show that June 22, 2023, was the first Preliminary Plan Commission meeting and the applicant went beyond the scope of the project. It's difficult for us to accept all of this ambiguity and misinformation and it not unlike what we're heard all along.

For you, the Urbana City Council members, to accept this final report would be a disservice for the entire community, not just the Black community. We're putting this together for the Black community and you're assuming we don't know what's going on.

The information that we know of coming from the Plan Commission was nothing related to what our proposal was. We made our own proposal to the City Council regarding Hope Village and the subsequent changes on site, and it was voted to move forward with no changes by the City Council on December 18, 2023. From your information you indicated that changes were made on the site based upon community input. The only thing we know of that changed is the address associated with Hope Village, and they said it no longer existed. The information we presented in December totally identified all of the necessary concerns of the neighboring residents and was a solution to all of our concerns and it was totally rejected. No recommendations came from the Plan Commission even though they had all the pertinent data. *Background Information:* At the November 9, 2023, meeting, the City of Urbana Principal Planner proposed to subdivide the land which would cut off access to Federal Drive in Urbana. The Plan Commissioners rejected this new change, and a unanimous vote was made for the applicant to revise the plan with access coming from Federal Drive (instead of through the Carver Drive subdivision). Link to video: [Plan Commission Meeting - Thursday, November 9, 2023 - YouTube](#)

However, on December 7, 2023, the Chair of the Plan Commission stated additional public input (including an optional plan by Robert Lewis representing neighboring residents) was not allowed before they voted. The Chair of the Plan Commission stated final public input was allowed only before the hearing that was closed at the November 9, 2023, meeting. They did not convey this to us prior to this meeting and so they must have changed it. Robert Lewis had shared 10 copies of the alternative design proposal through the city planner, but it had to be resubmitted to the City Council on December 18, 2023, and he added additional points to the design for the City Council to review.

In their final comments on December 7, the Plan Commissioners asked the City Council to work closely with neighboring residents citing five guiding principles which prevented them from approving or disapproving of the final PUD. Our response was not being adequately addressed at that time because the Plan Commission sent no final recommendations to the City Council.

They should have considered all the proposals, not just the applicant, everyone should have been interviewed. They did nothing except change the address at the December 18, 2023, meeting because they didn't like what they had which is inconsistent with the building permit. By virtue of that act, we concluded it is actually legal oppression, and they need to respond to that allegation due to their actions to perpetuate a Jim Crow law.

## **CONCLUSION**

We recognize this is a difficult process for the average person, and it requires a person to be well versed in a number of disciplines. Unfortunately, it appears that giving the task of evaluating the process without adequate support for this role and responsibility would lead to the obvious conclusion there are no claims here.

But we assert that if the appropriate disciplines were included it would be a totally different outcome. In each case of this process, starting with the design of the site and the ordinances of the Urbana city council and what was approved to be done violated their own ordinances and put the African American community in a very vicarious political position. That is to try to address a politically driven project that is against their own ordinances and rejected a proposal by the African American community to solve it.

To me and to all the people involved, it is absolutely and unequivocally legal manipulation of the process to oppress black families, both Urbana and Champaign are complicit in the process. (1.) They capriciously located it against the will of the ordinance that was approved especially for the African American community; however, their proposal was rejected and sent to the council without recommendation. (2.) By the virtue of not having ample discussion from the council about this significant change it was moved forward by the council rejecting again the request of the African American community. Case in point, the acquisition of a street by virtue of (by right), thus adversely impacting the entire community of Carver Drive, a historically African American Community. By virtue of their actions by the City Council and the plan commission, they did not respond to our proposal to meet the need of the African American community and placed their children at risk for increased traffic and the potential for life threatening conditions to exist. Thus, the reason we concluded that it is legal oppression and the burden this process has placed upon the Black Community!!!

We have another letter prepared for the attorney general discussing the recent November 19, 2024, meeting and we didn't leave anything out. You obviously left critical details out of the summaries. Especially a person of color who didn't read the report and made assumptions about their people and the generational slap of people who put their necks on the line to fight for rights of residents.

None of the information provided was accurate; it was misleading, and the people that were providing the information were not requested to provide testimony. The information was incomplete because the people we requested were not allowed to provide testimony or information they might have relevant to this case. The conclusions, as we read this report, were inconclusive and inaccurate based upon our records of city and community meetings and documents we have. We have extensive files on everything we've done since this project began that she could have used to do this analysis. Obviously, she was reluctant to use it because it is in conflict with what she reported.

The design of the project should not negatively impact the neighborhood to the south and we should not be pulling anything through it because of the aging infrastructure. It was recommended to put a buffer between the Black community and the development and to provide a phasing in of the intervention slowly. Why didn't they address our needs as the ordinance says? The city is forcing something on a community that said they didn't want to do this, and then violating their own rules.

The reason the content of the final report is only two pages of summaries is that they did not follow protocol. Our expectation is that you follow procedures to do a thorough investigation.

NOTE: If you wish to see the real documents associated with this problem within the African American community, we have the full documents including drawings, statements, videos, etc.