



**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
URBANA PLAN COMMISSION**

APPROVED

DATE: December 18, 2025

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Dustin Allred, Andrew Fell, Bill Rose, Karen Simms, Chenxi Yu

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Will Andresen

STAFF PRESENT: Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services;
Aimirou Sy, Planner II; Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II

OTHERS PRESENT: Susan Norris

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum with all members present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of June 26, 2025 Rescheduled Meeting

The minutes of June 26, 2025 rescheduled meeting were presented to the Plan Commission. Mr. Fell moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Ms. Simms seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Minutes of November 6, 2025 Regular Meeting

The minutes of the November 6, 2025 regular meeting were presented to the Plan Commission. Mr. Rose moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Mr. Fell seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

- Email from Alejandro and Simona Lleras Buetti regarding Plan Case No. 2517-M-25
- UP510 | Plan Making – Corridor Planning for Urbana’s Philo Road | Fall 2025

- Community Engagement Map Activity Overview
- Using Tactical Urbanism to Activate Philo Road

E. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

F. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

G. NEW PUBLIC HEARING

Plan Case No. 2517-M-25 – A request by Susan Norris, on behalf of Charlotte Pug Holdings, LLC, to rezone 904 East Main Street, from R-3 (Single-Family Residential) Zoning District to B-3 (General Business) Zoning District.

Chair Allred opened the public hearing for Plan Case No. 2517-M-25. He reviewed the procedures for a public hearing.

Aimirou Sy, Planner II, presented Plan Case No. 2517-M-25 to the Plan Commission. He began by noting that staff is recommending approval of the rezoning request. The remainder of the presentation will outline the analysis and findings that led to the recommendation.

He noted the purpose for the rezoning, which is to allow for the expansion of the Good Friends Animal Hospital and presented a brief background of the proposed site and the surrounding adjacent properties. He noted the zoning and explained how the request to rezone the lot relates to the 2025 *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan. He highlighted the major LaSalle National Bank and Sinclair criteria that the rezoning relates and complies with. He reviewed staff findings and presented staff's recommendation, which is as follows:

Based on the evidence presented in the written staff report, and without the benefits of considering additional evidence that may be presented during this hearing, staff recommends that the Plan Commission recommends APPROVAL of the map amendment (i.e. rezoning) to the City Council.

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

Mr. Fell asked what the side yard setback is for the proposed site. He said that some zoning districts have a different setback if the subject property abuts residential use as opposed to business use. Olivia Jovine, Director of Community Development Services, replied that in the R-3 Zoning District, the minimum side yard setback is five (5) feet, and in the B-3 Zoning District, the minimum side yard setback is also five (5) feet. There is no footnote if it is abutting a residential use in the B-3 District.

Mr. Fell stated that along this block a person is required to build to the average block face. What happens if they add on to this building? Are they required to do the average block face, or do they get to build out to the face of their existing building? He noted that the reason he is asking is because it will have some impact on the neighbor to the west. Ms. Jovine responded saying that she is not able to answer the question on the block frontage.

Mr. Fell asked if the alley that appears on the north side is vacated. Ms. Jovine said yes, it appears correct.

Chair Allred stated that the business is an animal hospital use; however, animal hospital is not listed in the Table of Uses. He asked what use in the Table of Uses did staff determine this to be. Ms. Jovine stated that there were several options for the service providing business. Staff decided to use the general commercial categorization. This is an interesting point because it is not a medical use, but rather a service for the care of animals.

Chair Allred asked why rezone from a residential district to a fairly intense business district as opposed to rezoning to the least permissive business district that would allow the use that is being requested for this particular project. He explained the reason he is asking this is because the Plan Commission has had a couple cases in the past where they have rezoned a property in support of a particular project and the project did not happen. Another use took advantage of the rezoning that was not intended, so this is a major concern of his. Mr. Sy replied that staff wanted to be consistent with the zoning of the adjoining property owned by the applicant, which is already zoned B-3. Chair Allred commented that the fact there is a B-3 use in this residential area is problematic to begin with.

Chair Allred noted that the place type in the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use map shows this area as being classified as Neighborhood 1 and asked if the B-3 Zoning District is a good fit within the general description of the Neighborhood 1 place type. Mr. Sy replied yes because it is compatible with the adjoining property, which is zoned B-3. It removes a deteriorated structure and improves the neighborhood's conditions. It also prevents hardship that would result from keeping the outdated zoning classification.

With there being no further questions for City staff, Chair Allred opened the hearing for public input. He invited the applicant's representative to approach the Plan Commission.

Dr. Susan Norris, applicant, approached the Plan Commission to speak on behalf of her application. She explained why they purchased the property. She mentioned that they share a drive with the subject property, and there is very little space between the Animal Hospital building and the previous house at 904 East Main Street. Unfortunately, the house was in a state of disrepair, so they demolished it. The property, itself, is very small, and they were concerned about either having a new neighbor in a structure that was not in great shape or another business using the small lot. The Animal Hospital is hoping to expand at some point in the future. They have no immediate plans to do so at this time. In the meantime, they can park their cars in the vacant lot.

She said that they want to do what is right for the community and for the neighbors. If they need to rezone the property where the Animal Hospital currently is located, then she would consider that.

Ms. Jovine asked the applicant to describe the uses of the current animal hospital. Dr. Norris stated that they perform exams and surgeries, offer boarding for medical purposes, intensive care, and everything within an animal hospital.

Chair Allred asked if this provided more insight into the use and the Table of Uses in terms of zoning.

With there being no additional input from the audience, Chair Allred closed the public input portion of the hearing and opened it for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Mr. Fell stated that his family used Good Friends veterinarians for their pets in the past. He stated that it is dangerous to drive around the Good Friends Animal Hospital building so he understands the need to mitigate this issue.

He went on to say that when he first looked at this case, he questioned why they rezone to B-3 when they do not need to. However, he is less concerned about that because we try not to spot zone places. If they rezone the property to another zoning district, then they would be spot zoning two different properties and would make the problem worse. Rezoning 904 East Main Street to a different zoning district would also limit the Animal Hospital's ability to potentially expand the building because different zoning districts have different criteria in square footage, open space, etc. Also, trying to construct one building across two different zones is problematic at times. So, while he understands questioning the B-3 Zoning District, he believes it is more appropriate to rezone the parcel to be the same zoning as the neighboring lot that Good Friends Animal Hospital is currently on.

Ms. Yu stated Mr. Fell just answered her question about the difficulty of expanding the use across two lots that are zoned differently. Ms. Simms said he answered her question as well.

Chair Allred said that he had not thought of it like this, but he is still concerned with rezoning a parcel for a particular project and owner. If something goes wrong, the list of permitted uses in the B-3 Zoning District are quite extensive, and many of them are not appropriate for a residential neighborhood, uses like liquor store, tavern, or a nightclub, among others. He does not know how the original animal hospital property came to have B-3 zoning, but he does not know that we want to compound that mistake by rezoning another parcel that could at some point in the future create more problems.

Ms. Norris stated that prior to the Good Friends Animal Hospital, there was a gas station on the property, which is why she believes that the property is zoned B-3. An animal clinic/hospital was opened around 1988 by Dr. Cole, formerly Dr. Lipton. She said that there are still buried gas tanks on the property, and a developer would need to follow the Environmental Protection Agency's steps to remove them.

Mr. Fell asked if Chair Allred would feel better if the applicant withdrew this rezoning request and submitted a new request to rezone both properties to B-1, Neighborhood Business. Chair Allred said yes. He feels that they should try to figure out how to allow for this project in a way that does not potentially allow for other incompatible uses. Ms. Jovine stated that her question is if the Plan Commission does not approve the proposed rezoning, then does that prohibit the petitioner from submitting a rezoning for the same property. If not, then she thinks pursuing a rezoning of both parcels is feasible given that there is no development time pressure, and the petitioner controls both parcels.

Mr. Fell asked if the applicant could withdraw their request. Then, the Plan Commission would not have done anything with it to prohibit a future application to rezone. Ms. Jovine said yes, that is correct. This would potentially be a workaround for our lack of knowledge of procedure. Chair Allred asked if the Plan Commission could take no action and continue the case to allow staff time to find an answer on how to proceed. Ms. Jovine stated that it needs to be a new case, because it

would affect the 250-foot boundary of neighboring properties. So, staff would need to assign a new case number, issue a new legal notice, etc. Mr. Fell suggested continuing the case to the next regular meeting to allow the applicants time to decide if they want to withdraw their request to rezone to B-3.

Ms. Simms asked if the original parcel, that was formerly a gas station, can be rezoned to B-1. She imagines that there may be environmental issues and some complications with the land.

Mr. Rose said that everyone considers B-1 zoning to be an appropriate fit for a Neighborhood 1 place type, whereas B-3 zoning is not a good fit within Neighborhood 1. He feels that everyone is also in favor of encouraging this particular use at this location and facilitating it however we can. He is in favor of continuing the case to allow the client to revise their course of action to the best outcome.

Mr. Fell moved that the Plan Commission continues Plan Case No. 2517-M-25 to the next regularly scheduled meeting. Ms. Simms seconded the motion.

Chair Allred stated that the Plan Commission's intention is to give staff a chance to look into some of their questions that were raised and to give the opportunity for the petitioner in discussion with staff to figure out the best way forward. One option would be withdrawal of the current case and reapplication to rezone both properties to the B-1 Zoning District.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

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

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

H. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

I. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

J. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

K. STUDY SESSION

A Presentation by Staff on UIUC Department of Urban and Regional Planning's "Plan Making: Philo Road Corridor"

Chair Allred opened this item on the agenda.

Ms. Jovine talked about the handouts that were in front of the Plan Commission members on the dais. She stated that the Philo Road Corridor used to be a thriving commercial district several decades ago. In recent years, the Philo Road Corridor has seen depreciation and has high retail

vacancies. There is quite a bit of purpose-built architecture along that corridor, for example, Burger King, the dollar stores, and Walgreens, which are all now vacant. So, this presents a challenge for the City of Urbana and has become a focus for the new administration. Mayor Williams is very interested in seeing revitalization in this corridor.

Building off of this momentum, Mr. Allred and the resources available at the University of Illinois graciously offered to frame some of these questions with a planning studio to explore what that revitalization might look like, and whether the corridor can return to a previous level of activity or should be reimagined entirely. So, City staff were very grateful for their work. She stated that she just wants to introduce it in this study session, so City staff has asked Mr. Allred's students to come before and present to the Plan Commission at a future date. The students work will inform a small area plan that City staff will undertake for the Philo Road Corridor.

She mentioned that the University course focused on the small area plan making process and was grounded in existing conditions research. and then recommendations for potential planning interventions for short, medium, and long-term strategies for transforming that area were made. The student work acted as proof of concept giving City staff kernels to spark broader conversations and have been provided to the City of Urbana as final work products.

Ms. Jovine stated that the first step of the course was really to build off the Philo Road Community Block party which was held on September 7, 2025. Philo Road Ahead branding was released and the parking lot of Sunnycrest Mall was transformed into a kind of popup experience. There were over 500 different community members who came out. She noted that the City's Fire Department had a barbeque. The Urbana Free Library had information. City staff had bubbles and live music. There were information stations from many City departments. The City's public partners and Mr. Allred's students were able to build off of this opportunity and created several engagement stations.

The first station had a mapping exercise, which grounded the community feedback based on commonly traveled paths and areas of activity nodes and hosted a series of casual interviews to get community feedback by asking questions and engaging in conversation with members of the community. All of this was reported, synthesized, and summarized in one of the handouts that you have in front of you. Those conversations helped ground the students in the context of the community and also to think about what Urbana might find useful in a broader sense.

Secondly, the students built off of the Philo Road Business District Revitalization Action Plan, which was produced in February of 2005. She said that this report identifies the characteristics, grounded it in data. and shadows of what is to come. There was already a decline in retail vibrancy in that area. The students refreshed data that had originally been used in 2005.

Ms. Jovine stated that the latter part of the school semester was devoted to producing work products that could be used to spark conversations and reimagine the area. The students provided recommendations across economic development with a focus on mobility, property ownership, and vacancy analysis. From the economic development angle, we also got some analysis on the feasibility of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in the Corridor or a business association with helpful timelines, thinking strategically about building partnership along the way, and how it is a long process to create a TIF.

She said there were ideas for tactical urbanism which were more short-term interventions that would require fewer resources. She mentioned that the tactical urbanism recommendations were handed

out as well. The tactical urbanism recommendations were received well by City staff because it is a continuation of the success that we had with the Philo Road Ahead event. There are more ways to continue engaging folks in low-cost, high-impact interventions that utilize existing partnerships with nonprofits or even businesses.

Ms. Jovine stated that there were some spatial planning recommendations which reimaged the area as a residential corridor or neighborhood as opposed to a fully commercial corridor. Those explorations in housing typology and residential neighborhood were interesting and certainly sparked a lot of conversation. City staff appreciated the students' work and will take the analysis, especially the existing conditions work, and will inform the future small area plan and additional work that we do in the Philo Road area.

Chair Allred stated that the work that the students did, in particular the latter half with the tactical urbanism and then economic development, were not necessarily recommendations to the city, but they were meant to be more materials that could be used to engage stakeholders and the community in the neighborhood to get the conversation going as opposed to just asking people what they like about Philo Road or what would they like to see different.

He asked what the City's long-term approach to this was intended to be. He said it sounds like a small area plan is the process and the eventual outcome of this. He asked what the role of the Plan Commission and the eventual procedural outcome would be, and whether it would be adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Jovine replied that she did not have any answers at this time. She noticed that this topic of discussion had come up before at previous Plan Commission meetings. She thinks it is very important that we enter the small area plan making process with a fully baked idea of how it will be adopted if necessary. She pointed out that the small area plan is identified in the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan as one of the City's near-term goals.

Ms. Jovine stated that from a department perspective the objective is to staff up and stabilize the Planning Division first. Before embarking on a small area plan, City staff have a housing study happening, which staff have engaged Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC or RPC) to provide professional services for that. She said that the housing study will be informative for any future planning work.

Regarding the overall vision of the Philo Road area, she said that City staff has not fully landed on a vision or a strategy. Staff are still in the listening and study phase. There is an internal Philo Road working group that meets monthly to keep momentum building. Staff are looking at immediate stabilization of some of the retail and commercial assets. This is a priority. A longer-term vision is certainly still in development. The goal is to have a vibrant community that benefits the city as a whole.

Chair Allred asked if there is a timeline for the housing study. Ms. Jovine replied that the City just had a kickoff and is now in the data transfer stage. There will be various touch points in the spring and early summer, which could include a presentation to the Plan Commission. Full delivery is slated for early fall of 2026. So, it will be in development over the first half of the new year.

Chair Allred asked that the Plan Commission be kept in the loop. He said that many cases come before the Plan Commission, and the recommendations they make hinge on housing and the need for certain types of housing. So, having this information is important for the work that they do. He asked if the housing study would address the wide variety of housing types...not just affordable

housing, but market rate housing as well. Ms. Jovine explained that staff are framing this as a housing needs assessment in a traditional sense. It will cover all product types and income levels, including affordable but also market rate. We will be doing analysis on the rental market and shadow rental markets as well to understand what is happening with those dynamics. The housing study does include a portion of community outreach, feedback, and data gathering through surveys. This cannot begin until the students are back in school and established for the spring semester. She believes it might potential also include some analysis of from a business perspective what the commercial landlords are providing. Staff are limiting the scope to the existing conditions analysis with the focus on all market types. This will support future conversations about policy recommendations or strategies. Because of our budget constraints, staff are focusing on the housing needs assessment portion.

Chair Allred asked for an update on Planning staff. Ms. Jovine said that Aimirou Sy is Planner II. He joins us from St. Paul, Minnesota. She mentioned that the City has extended an offer to a Planner I candidate, who is also from out-of-state. Should she accept the offer, she would be bringing historic preservation expertise to the Planning team in addition to a wide range of other municipal planning expertise. Her plan is to release a job posting for a principal planner in the early part of the new year.

Ms. Simms asked if staff have data about why different businesses left the Philo Road area, in terms of economic variables and the media and messaging surrounding them. She mentioned that the Philo Road Corridor was impacted by the negative characterizations that she feels only amplified the exodus; however, it would be nice to have data. She does not want the City to come up with solutions that are disconnected from what the problem was, and she thinks that there could be some interim solutions that might address some of the problems that may not be complex.

She mentioned that there is a big push for entrepreneurship, but if the City does not deal with the messaging about the area along Philo Road, businesses are not going to want to think of the area as a viable option to locate. People need to see it as a safe, viable, and engaging area. Ms. Jovine replied that the City's efforts will not wait for the small area plan. Messaging and communication are core to the mission of the City's administration. She agrees that any recommendation should be grounded in data. City staff are in that phase now. From an economic development side, City staff are going to be conducting a void analysis to understand what potential retail opportunities are underserved and could be located there. Staff have also had several conversations with the broker community, and they certainly tell you everything that you need to improve and the challenges that have been faced. These conversations have been very valuable. Staff anticipate reaching out to larger corporate entities to understand their decision.

L. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Jovine

Olivia Jovine, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission