

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: September 5, 2024

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

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

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Will Andresen, Andrew Fell, Debarah McFarland

STAFF PRESENT: Teri Andel, Planning Administrative Assistant II; Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner; Will Kolschowsky, Senior Management Analyst; Mayor Diane Marlin, Carol Mitten, City Administrator; Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Cole Filges, Anjana Nair, Matt Raab, Aabha Sakharkar

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum of the members present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the July 11, 2024 and July 18, 2024 regular meetings and minutes of the August 22, 2024 special meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission approve all three sets of minutes as written. Ms. Simms seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written by unanimous voice vote.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

- Plan Commission Study Session – September 5, 2024
- *Imagine* Urbana List of Public Meeting Dates and Times
- Smile Politely article on “Some takeaways from Imagine Urbana”

E. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

F. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

G. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

H. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

I. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

J. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Garcia reported on the following:

- The text amendment to establish the CMU (Campus Mixed-Use) Zoning District was approved by City Council. He noted that the Council chose to go with the 120-foot building height.

K. STUDY SESSION

Image Urbana Comprehensive Plan Draft

Kevin Garcia (Principal Planner), Carol Mitten (City Administrator), and Andrea Ruedi (Senior Advisor for Integrated Development) approached the Plan Commission to present an update.

Mr. Garcia began by presenting the following agenda for their update:

- Introduction: UIUC UP510 Plan Making Class
- What we heard from August 22 Plan Commission Study Session
- *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan Structure
- Informal Neighbor Meetings Materials
- Maps Review and Discussion
- Topics for Future Plan Commission Study Sessions
- Public Input on *Imagine Urbana*

What we heard from August 22, 2024 Plan Commission Study Session

Mr. Garcia recapped the discussion from the August 22, 2024 Special Meeting of the Urbana Plan Commission.

Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan Structure

Ms. Ruedi talked about the overarching goals for the new plan. She presented a short comparison between the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and *Imagine Urbana*. She reviewed the schedule of upcoming public meetings and explained how staff has marketed the meetings. She also reviewed the materials (printed maps, poster boards, and handouts) and topics they plan to display and present at the public meetings. She mentioned that they have already been receiving comments from the plan being posted online.

Chair Allred asked staff to provide guidelines for the Plan Commission members so they know what to do. Mr. Garcia stated that staff will prepare a set of guidelines. He asked the Plan Commission members to let staff know which public meetings they plan to attend as well.

Informal Neighbor Meetings Materials

Mr. Garcia reviewed the proposed tasks for the University of Illinois students that are helping to prepare content for the public meetings. Then he reviewed the Future Land Use Map, which includes the Future Land Use designations and the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District service limit (sewers).

He shared the text that would be put on posters: one for *Imagine Urbana's* Vision and Values, one for the Big Ideas, and one for Big Moves and possibly Little Moves. Ms. Ruedi noted that the students will play around with color to make the four priorities stand out on the poster board.

Maps Review and Discussion

Mr. Garcia continued his presentation by talking about the Future Land Use descriptions. The University of Illinois student group worked on the following three designations this last week: Mixed Residential, Mixed Use, and Commercial. He mentioned that even the lowest intensity residential districts could have some mixing of uses because when you want to build complete neighborhoods, you do not want only residential uses in a neighborhood.

He presented an update to the Mobility Map and noted the changes made from the map in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Allred asked if any Plan Commission members had comments or discussion on any of the materials staff plans to present at the public meetings.

Mr. Rose asked if there is an implied direction for growth when talking about mixed use and mixed residential. It seems to imply mixing over time. Mr. Garcia replied that transition is certainly implied. He said that one big failure of the planning and zoning profession and how we have done things for the past hundred years is that zoning and planning has kind of been used to prevent all change in certain areas, and we have run into many problems because of this. So, we are now trying to introduce the concept to allow change, but not dramatic change, over time that will enhance areas and neighborhoods. Chair Allred pointed out that there is another map that shows the changes from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.

Mr. Rose stated that he anticipates participating in some of the public meetings. He asked what to expect in terms of volume of people attending and will they be able to say that they did a good job soliciting the meetings. Mr. Garcia said that they will be able to evaluate how well they did at the meetings; and as to volume, Mr. Garcia said it could vary from one person of the public attending to 200 people attending. Ms. Ruedi noted what staff has done to promote the public meetings.

Mr. Rose asked what a Plan Commission member's role or responsibility is at the public meetings. Chair Allred said that the Plan Commission members will be there to listen and not really participate in the meetings. Mr. Hopkins added that the members should refer the public who have questions to speak with City staff.

Ms. Ruedi noted that the comments staff have received from the public from viewing the draft online has been really good feedback. She mentioned that when doing the Balancing Act activity in each ward, attendance ranged from some meetings having no one show and then some meetings had quite a few people. The best City staff can do is to try and reach as many people as possible.

Ms. Simms stated that the photos should be reflective of the diversity of the types of housing. She wants to be sure that we are not projecting a class stratification with some of the neighborhoods. She stated that she has not seen what could be identified as targeted equity initiatives such as addressing structural inequalities in certain neighborhoods or neighborhoods that are typically underrepresented. She understands that the idea around creating definite and definitive boundaries around neighborhood is to create more neighborhood cohesion and to do community building. However, because we have structural inequality and inequities, could it create far more division and actually get in the way of some of the other goals in the plan? Ms. Ruedi replied that one of the exercises that they did for updating the Comprehensive Plan was called “Balancing Act” and a person would score an equity point or a sustainability point for the different things the person did. She said that they might be able to relate this more to what they have for Little Moves. Mr. Garcia said that there are things in the draft plan that could be called out to address inequities. He noted that City staff has been explicit not to define neighborhood boundaries anywhere in the maps that they will be using. He stated that he does not even know what the neighborhood boundaries are.

Mr. Hopkins stated that one of the action types is to create explicit neighborhood boundaries and develop boundaries. He mentioned this before and had stated his reasons why this is a bad idea. Now, he said, Ms. Simms has added another reason. Chair Allred mentioned that it was Big Move #3, Create Neighborhood Plans. Mr. Garcia explained that City staff wrote this Move because the Comprehensive Plan does not get to the level of detail necessary for small areas or neighborhood plans. Mr. Hopkins said to get rid of the label because the way it is written it goes back to the boundary notion and definitions and images and class stratification.

Chair Allred stated that Big Move #1 in the draft plan talks about things like addressing Urbana’s diverse housing needs, so the challenge is how to represent that idea in the plan. This is where we have gotten into the potential frustration of having really large categories that cover large areas of residential development in the City without a lot of nuance. In some neighborhoods this might mean allowing more accessory dwelling units (ADUs) that are a more affordable source of housing in someone’s backyard and in another neighborhood that might duplexes or fourplexes. He is hoping this comes out in the public meetings. The big challenge is how to represent all of the Big Ideas and Big Moves in the visuals that they are making for the public meetings so that they are more effective at communicating these things. Mr. Garcia commented that staff is already planning to expand on what incremental development is in the plan. Incremental development is nuanced for each neighborhood. Some may be to allow ADUs in some neighborhoods, while other neighborhoods have duplexes and fourplexes. Staff needs to flesh this concept out more to figure out how to tell the story to folks in various neighborhoods. Staff and the University of Illinois students will figure it out.

Mr. Hopkins asked if they would have Google Maps available at the public meetings. Mr. Garcia said that staff can provide it to use. Mr. Hopkins felt it would be beneficial to have when talking with people about what neighborhood they want to look at. He is wondering how when looking at a neighborhood to imagine whether the plan connotated class stratification. Ms. Simms stated that she walks the neighborhoods, and it is primarily ranch-style housing, not great street lighting and

very few sidewalks. Mr. Hopkins stated that there are more discussions to be held because it actually affects some substantive things.

Mr. Hopkins inquired about the annotated map. Mr. Garcia said that the students have not added any annotations to the map; they have made some of the existing annotations more legible. Chair Allred stated that staff may need to provide two different versions in terms of font size when preparing one copy to put on an easel and the other copy to use on the table.

Mr. Garcia asked if the Plan Commission members saw anything missing or that needed to be refined before taking the materials to the public meetings. Mr. Hopkins replied that all the materials should have “DRAFT” in big letters.

Chair Allred suggested using more contrast to depict the downtown core from the secondary core because it is hard to distinguish.

Ms. Simms commented that staff has done a lot of hard work preparing the materials for the meetings. Mr. Garcia noted that the students have as well, and he is impressed with the amount of work they have accomplished.

Topics for Future Plan Commission Study Sessions

Mr. Garcia shared his list of future topics, which were as follows:

- Neighborhood Plans – Whether this should be one of the Big Ideas in the plan or not.
- How explicit inequities are addressed in various parts of the draft plan.
- Redefine incremental development and walkability

Mr. Rose stated that the first bullet point under the idea of Urbana as a city of connected neighborhoods is bothersome to him. It states “neighborhoods build on their assets and create neighborhood plans”. Mr. Rose stated if the City is not going to do this, then why are we encouraging them to do it.

Mr. Hopkins stated that they should divide the topics into two categories. One is for more substantive issues that we need to clarify, elaborate, modify, discuss because we may want to change the substance. The second category is sort of technical, editing document structure. He gave the following examples of substantive discussions in addition to the ones mentioned by Mr. Garcia:

- Walkability Default
- Overemphasis on Downtown Urbana
- Mixed Use Residential | Mixed Residential
- Affordable Housing
- Annexation Policy

Mr. Hopkins then listed the tasks that City staff and the University of Illinois students still need to work on before bringing them back to the Plan Commission for discussion. They are as follows:

- Elements of the proposed plan
 - Are they going to adopt the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan with a set of other plans that have been adopted as amendments to the existing 2005 Comprehensive Plan? If so, which plans are we going to adopt?

- “The overriding goals for the new plan guides other City initiatives and planning efforts and not an isolated tool to use for land use decisions.” He agrees that the Comprehensive Plan should not be isolated; however, they need to be aware of how other actions by all City departments are structured to make sure they are compatible with the way a comprehensive plan gets adopted, amended and revised. He feels that they need to structure the to-do lists from the principles and criteria for future decisions because they get used in different ways.
- Metrics in the proposed plan
- Examine Urbana – He said it contains some great data; however, a 371-page appendix is not going to be something used as a reference in a Plan Commission meeting or in a staff report to link the logic behind anything to have the legal backing to make the kinds of decisions the Plan Commission has to make. So, they need to find a way to have a much more concise but explicit link from some of our data and arguments to some of our proposal of criteria and principles.
- Clarify and represent all of the development types.
- Complete the maps.
- Imagine how to construct the proposed plan and include a bunch of stuff

Ms. Simms suggested that they remove “crime” from Big Moves 10 and 11 and link them together. They need to think about them more broadly, not just the neighborhoods being about crime and safety and green space. There is a larger category of work that really looks at community resilience that infuses them.

She noted that she has a problem with the word “access” because it does not always imply “have”.

Chair Allred noted that he had already submitted comments online; however, he wanted to point out that when looking at Big Move 8 through Big Move 11, he got the sense that individual City departments were responsible for creating certain Big Moves. As a result, there is a potential for synergies between some of the Big Moves that are not really discussed and taken advantage of, and there is also some redundancy that occurs. We need to do a better job at making the proposed plan seem cohesive and be more explicit about how some of the things in the plan tie together.

Mr. Hopkins noted that there is a lot of staff work needed in redrafting some portions of the proposed plan and modifying the overall structure. Chair Allred added that it will be good to see what staff brings to the Plan Commission after addressing some of the Plan Commission’s comments as well as the feedback received online from the public.

Chair Allred also mentioned that he feels there should be more discussion on how they are treating the Future Land Use categories, specifically mixed use, the core and the secondary core. He suggested that at the next meeting, City staff present a breakdown for discussing the list of topics at future meetings.

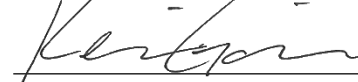
Public Input on *Imagine Urbana*

There was no public input.

L. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kevin Garcia", is written over a horizontal line.

Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission