

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: July 18, 2024

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

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

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Dustin Allred, Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Karen Simms, Chenxi Yu

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Will Andresen, Debarah McFarland, Bill Rose

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner; Teri Andel, Planning Administrative Assistant II

OTHERS PRESENT: Phyllis Williams

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 of the members present.

B. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

There was none.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

- Email from Annie Feldmeier Adams regarding Plan Case No. 2485-T-24
- Email from Graeme Rael regarding Plan Case No. 2485-T-24

E. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2485-T-24 – A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend Articles IV, V, VI and VIII of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to rename the B-3U (General Business-University) Zoning District as the Campus Mixed-Use Zoning District, and update development and parking regulations in the district.

Chair Allred re-opened the public hearing for Plan Case No. 2485-T-24. He noted that this case was continued from the July 11, 2024 meeting. The meeting left off with Plan Commission discussion. Since there is a new audience member present at this current meeting, he suggested that they re-open the public input portion of the public hearing.

Phyllis Williams approached the Plan Commission to speak. She felt that the City staff was trying to change our regulations to market a piece of property for some client rather than having the client come forward with a plan and ask for variances as part of the Planned Unit Development, if needed.

She believes that 75-feet is tall enough for a building, especially on Lincoln Avenue. One hundred twenty feet maximum height does not make a lot of sense.

She said that the residents are not going to get much in return. There are going to be parking problems in the neighborhood. There is no mention of lighting in the changes. The proliferation of lighting in certain areas of Urbana makes the areas appear to be unsafe and makes it hard to appreciate any kind of dark sky. She suggested the City use enclosed bulbs and something that makes it more person friendly.

Mr. Garcia mentioned that City staff has been doing some zoning compliance for some of the new lighting in the neighborhood. The City of Urbana has pretty robust standards for lighting in the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Allred asked for clarification that the proposed text amendment is for revisions of a zoning district, and there is not any kind of proposal for development of a specific parcel. Mr. Garcia replied that was correct.

Mr. Hopkins stated that when he researched the existing B-3U (General Business – University) Zoning District, he discovered a vacant parcel that the Plan Commission members had received a notification from a developer for a proposal for a 10-story building. He looked at the record for the meeting in May and discovered that the developer had responded to the survey, so he thinks it is disingenuous of the Plan Commission to pretend that there is no proposal on the table. So, he feels that we are making a change for a specific proposal that we know about. Mr. Garcia responded by saying that City staff has been working on the proposed text amendment for some time and talked to City Council around the end of 2022 and again in January 2023 about prioritizing a list of tasks. The proposed text amendment was at the top of the list. It has been a task that has been on the Planning Division's to-do list since he began working for the City in 2014.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he understands this. After last week's meeting, he assumed that the major thing that the Plan Commission would be talking about during this meeting is to have the maximum height of the building at 75 feet, 85 feet or 120 feet. At that meeting, the Plan Commission was saying it does not really matter because a 120-foot building would not happen. It turns out not only is there a parcel ready, there is a person wanting to do it on a particular parcel and we know who that person is. Mr. Garcia replied that when City staff went to City Council in 2023, staff told them about the vacant parcel and said that the current Zoning Ordinance would not allow it to be developed in a good way.

Mr. Fell clarified that when he commented about reducing the maximum height to 75 feet at the previous meeting, he had no idea that there was a proposal on the table. He really believed that no developer would propose a 120-foot-tall building in the district.

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. Garcia summarized the changes that he made to the proposed text amendment based on the discussion held by the Plan Commission at the July 11, 2024 meeting. He recommended that the main pedestrian entrance be located on the street that the building is addressed off of and to recommend that maximum height of 120 feet.

Ms. Simms believed that a lot of the discussion at the previous meeting was predicated primarily implicitly on an assumption that the best use of a development was for student housing. This was on her mind since the meeting because all the data indicates that student enrollment is going to decline. She felt that they need to think about how to improve development in reflection of where we think the City would be going. The first plan felt like it was trying to make it neighborhood friendly, which she could see it being multi-generational, multi economic. She can see a much more diverse pluralistic landscape, so she just wants us to be clear that the City may end up with a surplus of student housing. If we are making decisions with that sort of implicit about the best practice for development, many of the changes they made may not be what we want to see in 10 years. She believes they may have tossed away some values that might take the City further in terms of the types of communities we could build. Some of the specific changes that were discussed at the previous meeting included the space between the sidewalk and the front door, the maximum height of a building, and scaling back of parking spaces.

The Plan Commission talked about the changes they recommended at the previous meeting and how to adjust them to allow for mix-use developments and alternatives for student housing in the future. Mr. Fell encouraged staff to come up with some incentive program for a developer that wants to build a mix-use development. Mr. Garcia mentioned that part of the district is within the Enterprise Zone, which allows some tax breaks if a certain percentage of the overall floor space is commercial.

Mr. Hopkins stated that as far as requiring the main entrance to be located on the street that the building is addressed on, it does not matter because they could always have the address changed in the future.

Ms. Yu stated that she felt herself to be in support of the maximum height of a building to be 120 feet. Mr. Hopkins stated that he has concerns about the maximum height being 120 feet; however, it would be nice if there would be a way for the Plan Commission to have discretionary evaluation of developments in the proposed district. Is there a way to do this by requiring a Special Use Permit. Mr. Garcia suggested the following, *"Building height is a maximum of 85 feet by right. If you want to construct a taller building than 85 feet, then you have to get a Special Use Permit"*. Chair Allred and Mr. Fell agreed that there would need to provide some guidance about what would satisfy the Special Use Permit review. The kind of guidance to provide could include bulk and the setback from street edge.

Chair Allred pointed out that the proposed text amendment as originally written by City staff never indicated that development would be constructed as student housing. The discussions by the Plan Commission is what steered this way of thinking. Other than the 12-foot ceiling height requirement on the first floor and the maximum height limit of the building, he did not believe that there was anything being proposed that would not allow other types of development. It really just depends on the market.

The Plan Commission talked about density issues and urban development. One way is by controlling building height and bulk to protect shade and light for properties across the street from a

development. Chair Allred stated that we have a pattern built in with the zoning that provides for transitions to a certain extent. They would be potentially altering the pattern with the proposed text amendment. They need to figure out if they would be creating discontinuities by removing the buffer that transition from some parts of Lincoln Avenue with two story homes to something else that might be six or seven-story buildings.

Mr. Garcia stated that the solution may already be in the proposed text amendment. City staff is recommending adding Residential Planned Unit Development (PUD) to the list of permitted uses. If a developer wanted to go above the maximum height, then the developer could apply for a PUD. A PUD requires 1/2 acre. A block is equivalent to about 2-1/2 acres in this district.

The Plan Commission discussed whether it should be a Special Use Permit, a Residential Planned Unit Development, or set the maximum height of a building at 85 feet. Ms. Yu stated that smaller scale development would get relief from the parking requirement and would be able to build up to 85 feet, which should be sufficient. For certain cases where a developer wants to construct a bigger building, the developer would have to go through the PUD process to get approval. She did not think this would be too burdensome. Mr. Garcia clarified that a developer can ask for whatever relief or deviation from the Zoning Ordinance they want. Mr. Fell added that the Zoning Ordinance will allow certain relief if a developer offers certain benefits.

Ms. Yu moved that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2485-T-24 to City Council with a recommendation for approval based on the Planning staff's revised text amendment with the change of the maximum height limit to 85 feet. Mr. Hopkins seconded the motion.

Mr. Fell asked for a modification to the motion to say 85 feet to the roof surface. Mr. Garcia responded that the Zoning Ordinance does not describe "building height" anywhere else.

Mr. Garcia asked for clarification on the motion as to whether it includes City staff's recommendation that the main pedestrian entrance be located on the street that the building is addressed off of. Ms. Yu said yes. Mr. Hopkins stated that his second still holds.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

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

The motion passed by unanimous vote. Mr. Garcia stated that this case would be forwarded to Committee of the Whole on August 5, 2024.

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:

- Comprehensive Plan – Staff sent out a draft of the Comprehensive Plan. The study session at the Plan Commission will be on August 22, 2024. Maps will be coming soon.

Ms. Simms stated that it would have been nice to have had some additional step to discuss the draft plan. She said that there is just something that happens with collaborative discussions. Mr. Garcia stated that while they have a tentative timeline, it is not set in stone, so City staff will be doing as many study sessions with the Plan Commission as needed before it becomes a case and they hold public hearings.

Mr. Hopkins did not see a reason why the draft plan could not be shared with the public when it is a public plan. Mr. Garcia stated the Plan Commission is the body that prepares the draft plan for City Council. If the Plan Commission members want to make the plan public now, then City staff can have conversations and make a decision on it. Mr. Hopkins felt that they need to have a conversation on the whole process. Chair Allred asked to have this built into the agenda for August 22, 2024. They talked about the timeline.

K. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

L. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission