

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**URBANA PLAN COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** November 21, 2024

**TIME:** 7:00 P.M.

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

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**MEMBERS ATTENDING:** Dustin Allred, Will Andresen, Lew Hopkins, Debarah McFarland, Bill Rose, Chenxi Yu

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Will Andresen, Karen Simms

**STAFF PRESENT:** Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner; Teri Andel, Administrative Assistant II; Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development; Carol Mitten, City Administrator

**OTHERS PRESENT:** There were none.

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**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 were none.

**D. COMMUNICATIONS**

- Future Land Use Descriptions
- *Imagine Urbana* Updates to Big Ideas, Big Moves & Little Moves
- Development Opportunities Map
- 2024 Future Land Use Framework
- Draft Future Land Use Map

**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**

Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, reported on the following:

- Plan Case No. 2493-T-24 – The text amendment to eliminate Lot and Width Requirements for Two-Family Dwellings in the R-2 and R-3 Zoning Districts was reviewed and kept in Committee of the Whole. It will be reviewed by them again on December 5, 2024.

**K. STUDY SESSION**

***Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan Draft – Future Land Use Descriptions**

Chair Allred opened this item on the agenda. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, and Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development, presented the agenda for discussion topics on the Comprehensive Plan. They were as follows:

- I. **Recap 11/7 Study Session  
Incremental Development, Infill, & Annexations  
Walkability**

Mr. Garcia gave a brief run through of the discussion for the previous meeting.

- II. **Future Land Use Categories/Maps**

Mr. Garcia talked about the layout for the new Future Land Use Descriptions and noted the difference between the existing and the new. One of the differences is that City staff paired down the descriptions from 15 to 7\*, which are 1) Residential Neighborhood, 2) Mixed-Residential Neighborhood, 3) Mixed Use (\*core and secondary), 4) Commercial, 5) Institutional, 6) Industrial, and 7) Green Spaces and Recreation. He talked about the illustrated map that the students have begun creating for the descriptions. Each map outlines the concept that will be outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

**RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD**

Mr. Hopkins commented that there is a problem in that we are talking about land uses and in many of these descriptions, we are actually talking about development types that have multiple land uses. He recommended calling them something other than land types, maybe “development types”. Doing so would allow them to include a retail node in a diagram but still distinguish land uses that later may indicate zoning. Chair Allred stated that the Charlotte Comprehensive Plan calls these “Place types”. Mr. Hopkins felt that “Place types” is more neutral, but the key point is that we have to have some distinction between levels of aggregation of what we are talking about.

Mr. Hopkins went on to say that when you talk about small business and neighborhoods, there is an ambiguity of what that term means. The descriptions include home businesses, regulated within the current Zoning Ordinance. A home office would not appear in the diagram because they would not look any different from any other house; whereas a small home retail store would look different and has to meet different conditions. The Comprehensive Plan in the end is going to be the backing for any modifications to the Zoning Ordinance, so if we want to encourage home businesses, then we need to say that. So, it gets back to we have to decide whether we are talking about development patterns of a neighborhood of a given scope or land uses. Chair Allred added that there is more than one way to create complete neighborhoods, so it could be a finer grain distribution of different land uses/different zoning categories as well as allowing certain things within certain land uses or zoning categories. They need to figure out which approach and to what extent we would allow different things in residential uses as opposed to distributing commercial corridors of different intensities throughout the City so that we have complete neighborhoods.

Chair Allred stated that there was meant to be more to the graphic to show change over time. The idea is to have before and after panels. The before panel would be the two sides of an existing development with vacant land in the middle but showing where the stubbed streets are so that it suggests if someone going to develop the vacant land, then they need to think about how they make the connections between the existing development on either side of it. This is what the second panel is going to show. The students are trying to accomplish multiple things with the graphics by showing change over time and the need to think about connectivity but also patterns of development and development types.

#### MIXED-RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Mr. Garcia continued with his staff presentation by talking about the Mixed Residential Neighborhood. Mr. Hopkins stated that he did not feel that they call them “neighborhood serving businesses” in the Mixed Residential Neighborhood because that is actually probably not what they are going to be. Many businesses would not survive if their market was only the neighborhood it is located in.

Mr. Rose stated that the photographs and the sketch shows two different things. One shows pictures of buildings and the other shows streetscape. He said that he would like to see what is aspirational in a drawing be within reach of what we show existing. Mr. Hopkins noted that the students have done work showing the mobility connections that includes street cross sections) that we do not have access to yet. These will provide the connection that Mr. Rose is talking about. Chair Allred added that the students did not actually draw the sketches and included them for the purpose of discussion. He said that the images to him are more of what he considers “development types”. He understands that Mr. Rose wants more “place types” and wants to be able to see what it looks like as if he was walking down the street. Mr. Rose replied that he would like to have images that someone could understand what we have but also where we are going. Linking the image to what we are trying to achieve is important.

Mr. Rose went on to talk about incremental infill or redevelopment at a smaller scale and said that he would like to see this portrayed as well. Mr. Garcia replied that many times we see one giant parcel where everything gets built all at once, but we have vacant sites that we could show getting filled in over time.

Mr. Hopkins stated that we need to be careful of our usage of the terms, “incremental”, “infill” and “development” because they are three different things. Ms. Ruedi stated that staff forgot to attach

the definition page so that is another piece that staff needs to provide to get that kind of feedback what that differentiation is.

#### MIXED USE

Mr. Garcia talked about the “Mixed Use” description. Ms. Ruedi asked if the Plan Commission members felt that they should only use photographs since the illustrations seem to be causing some confusion. Mr. Hopkins replied that given our resources to get drawn exactly what we want, he felt at the moment that the best solution would be to only use photos. Chair Allred agreed that it would be better to find images of existing places that are similar. Mr. Hopkins added if the photos are of places in Champaign and Urbana, then people could communicate more effectively because people will understand them. Mr. Garcia said that we have access to software that could give us photos of places in Urbana from an oblique angle and he knows that the Park District have staff licensed to operate a drone.

Mr. Hopkins stated that if staff did not see a problem with people recognizing the sketch as being the Pines, he felt it was a good example of infill. They could sharpen some of the word descriptions of what it is about and show what residential infill would look like at the Pines.

Mr. Rose asked about the ponds in the sketches. Mr. Garcia said the pond at the Pines exists already. Mr. Hopkins added that the pond on one of the other sketches was there because it represents the size of detention that would be required the scale of new development in that area.

#### COMMERCIAL

Mr. Garcia talked about the “Commercial” Future Land Use description. Mr. Hopkins said that they need to use a different label other than “Commercial”. He does not have a better term but just knows it needs to be changed. We also need to make clear that this is about higher development, and the use actually does not matter. Mr. Rose stated that he is comfortable with the use of “commercial” because it fits with architecture and construction to distinguish commercial from residential. Mr. Hopkins replied that he can see how that connotation works; however, they need to be much more explicit and talk about many other types of uses that could be located in a “Commercial” area.

Ms. Ruedi noted that when staff was first looking at these different types of descriptions, they talked about a continuum of intensity. Mr. Hopkins said that we do want discreet breaks, and in some cases the use actually matters.

Chair Allred said that some light industrial uses would make sense to be located in commercial areas. Mr. Hopkins agreed but noted some uses such as self-storage (unless it is located interior and designed for an urban content) and warehouses (because of truck traffic and nighttime activity) are not desirable in commercial areas. He explained that he applies five attributes to make a determination when establishing a category. They are 1) use (the activity that occurs there), 2) the physical form, 3) the interaction that affects the externalities on other places, 4) ownership, and 5) change over time.

Chair Allred suggested calling it an “Activity Center”, and it could be varied, like in the Charlotte Comprehensive Plan. For example, “Community Activity Center” would be something that would be more neighborhood focused. The hypothetical redevelopment of the Dart site is mostly residential but maybe has a node of retail and cafes. He went on to say that what we now call

“commercial” out on North Cunningham Avenue would be more of a “Regional Activity Center”. Mr. Hopkins stated that this would get to place types as opposed to uses. Much of the site diagrams that the students have done are about place types. When we get to the larger perspective maps, we are going to have to talk about places.

Mr. Garcia stated that when we get to the map, it shows changes between the existing Future Land Use and the draft form showing a fair number of areas that show change because he changed it from “Light Industrial/Office” to this “commercial”.

## INSTITUTIONAL

Mr. Garcia stated that he considers “Institutional” as sort of a special circumstance. So, it includes big campus/universities, hospitals, government. Mr. Hopkins said that he has a problem with “institutional” as a category, but in the context of a plan as opposed to a zoning or regulatory context, he asked if we are planning for institutional spatial patterns. How are we going to use the notion of institutional in the Comprehensive Plan. If we are labelling existing institutional to keep track of where we are, then it does not matter. However, if we are trying to think about institutional as something we are planning for the future, then we have to be pretty specific about what we are up to. Mr. Garcia said that we are not planning for institutional in the future. It is basically showing the extent of the institutional land holdings today. Ms. Ruedi added that they may even go as far to say that they discourage more institutional because it means that they do not pay property taxes. Mr. Hopkins said that this may be a reason to highlight this category.

Chair Allred stated that this included churches as well. Mr. Garcia said that churches can also occur in residential areas as well, so they did not map all of the churches. The map shows mostly big campus type places.

Mr. Hopkins said that if we think of these descriptions as “place types” which incorporates descriptions of development types, then we might eliminate the “institutional” category because the only thing that distinguishes the institutional category from any of the other things we are talking about is the regulatory conditions and property tax conditions of institutional uses. Chair Allred agreed that it would be better to describe them in the other place types where it would be appropriate to have uses like churches and schools. Mr. Hopkins added that they should not list colleges, County court houses, federal court houses, nonprofit hospitals, etc. and these places should not be color coded the same because we do not want them to be institutional if they become vacated and redeveloped.

## INDUSTRIAL

Mr. Garcia said that the current Comprehensive Plan has both Heavy Industrial and Light Industrial. IN the proposed Plan, staff went with a straight “Industrial” because that is what people think of as heavier industrial uses, such as big manufacturing and processing facilities, warehouse and distribution centers, and other uses that involve high traffic or uses that you do not want near where you live. So, there now would only be two areas labelled “industrial”, which would be North Lincoln Avenue (north of I-74) and North Cunningham Avenue (north of Farm & Fleet). Mr. Hopkins stated that if we are going to have “Industrial” only be for heavy industrial uses, then we need to explicitly identify the uses. He added that we should also keep in mind rail access. We do not want offices on North Lincoln because we would be giving up parcels that have access to the railway.

Mr. Hopkins stated that there is a way to treat heavy industrial as a positive opportunity rather than thinking of it as keeping it in a corner where nobody cares about it. Mr. Garcia replied that it has great access to highway and rail.

Mr. Hopkins did not recommend labelling North Cunningham Avenue as “Industrial” because he did not believe there are any noxious effects from the businesses located there. He wasn’t sure about Frasca Airport and thought it might be considered a different kind of area. He said that also he was not sure if the City wanted heavy industry along Route 45.

## GREEN SPACES AND RECREATION

Mr. Garcia stated that this is essentially the same as in the existing Comprehensive Plan; except, he included cemeteries in this category. Cemeteries used to be classified as “institutional” which does not make sense to him. Mr. Hopkins stated that they need to explain what is in a Green Space.

Chair Allred asked if there were any plans for future Green Space. Several responded with answers such as Kickapoo Rail Trail, Delcomyn property, Boneyard Creekway, etc.

Chair Allred asked if this is consistent with the Urbana Park District’s plans and with the University of Illinois Forest District plans. Mr. Garcia said that he would double check. He said that City staff met with the Urbana Park District staff, and he believed they are all on the same page. They are focusing more on park infill rather than expanding outside of the Urbana City boundaries.

Mr. Garcia noted that he created a 200-foot buffer on the flood plane and center line of the Saline Branch. Mr. Hopkins stated that we need to work on the details of this to protect the Saline and to protect the right-of-way where Olympian Drive dead ends. Mr. Hopkins stated that he feels we still need a Rural Residential place type. This would be a good example of where it belongs.

Mr. Hopkins went on to say that we also need a distinction of development or place type for the northeast Urbana because it should not be sewerred. Rural Residential is defined in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan for the specific purpose of sewer expansion and for road network type. He recalled that they had argued that they did not want bridges across the Saline Branch between Perkins Road and Olympian Drive. Even though this area is in the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), the City still needs to deal with the ETJ because when properties come into the City, these are the issues that matter. If we do not have specific backing, then we do not remember what to do.

## DRAFT FUTURE LAND USE MAP – CITY OF URBANA

Mr. Garcia stated that after their discussion on adding a Rural Residential place type, he will change the northeast area back to Rural Residential.

### III. Additional Maps

#### 2024 FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK MAP

Mr. Garcia noted some changes that he made to the map, which included:

1. South of Lincoln and Interstate 74 from Light Industrial/Office to Commercial.
2. Country Club from Institutional to Green Space.
3. County Fairgrounds switched to Green Space.

4. Campus Mixed-Use (CMU) Zoning District is now labelled as Campus Mixed Use on the map. Mr. Hopkins stated that because of the way the Zoning Ordinance was amended with regards to the CMU Zoning District, he felt that it should be distinct from previously labelled Campus Mixed-Use on the map. He suggested making Downtown Urbana and the CMU zoned properties be one place type, such as High Activity Corridor, different from South Lincoln Avenue. Gregory Place should be included in whatever the lower intensity placement is.
5. MTD on Lincoln Avenue from Light Industrial/Office to Business.
6. Dart area –
7. Brookens area - they need to figure out what they want to switch this area to. Chair Allred suggested Community Activity Center.
8. Undeveloped Menards site switched to Mixed Residential Use.
9. Delcomyn site switched to Green Space.
10. Illinois American Water site was changed to the lower intensity Mixed Use.

Mr. Garcia stated that schools will be annotated on the map because it helps people orient where they are looking.

Chair Allred inquired about the grocery store site in the north part of Urbana. He asked if they should say anything about it in the Draft Comprehensive Plan so that when it comes to the City for a rezoning, it would have the backing of the Plan. Mr. Garcia explained that the Future Land Use in the Draft Plan shows part of the site as Community Business and part as Mixed-Use Secondary. He believes that the existing Comprehensive Plan also backs the rezoning to allow a grocery store.

#### DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES MAP

Mr. Garcia stated that he is really impressed with the work that the students have done to help with the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Garcia explained the Development Opportunities Map.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the orange blobs are now being called “Activity Centers”. He pointed out that the South Lincoln Activity Center is not on the map, and it should be. He felt that they should be consistent and distinguish Downtown Urbana and the CMU area from the others maybe with annotations. Chair Allred suggested having the orange blob on Gregory Place because the annotation of Lincoln Avenue Corridor covers the rest of it.

Discussion was held on the intention of the orange nodes on the map. Mr. Garcia thought they represented areas that had more redevelopment potential. Mr. Hopkins believed that they are intended to be the activity nodes that we want to sustain.

Mr. Garcia said that the map gives them areas to focus on, especially since staff has finite time and there is a finite staff. Mr. Hopkins noted that the shapes of the orange blobs are intentional, that is they are a bit rounded and fuzzy to acknowledge the pattern of development the City wants. Mr. Garcia commented that he likes the dashed lines because that implies some sort of permeability.

Mr. Garcia mentioned that the map also calls out the sewer areas too, because staff gets a lot of people that want to expand to the south of Windsor Road. Chair Allred suggested adding “sewer” into the annotation for the areas that are “unserviceable by gravity”.

Mr. Garcia showed maps of Greensboro, North Carolina. He said that he likes calling the land use designations “place types”. For clarification, he said that they will be using the Development Opportunities Map and the Future Land Use Map in the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan.

#### IV. Updated Big Ideas/Big Moves/Little Moves

Mr. Garcia and Ms. Ruedi presented the “Updates to Big Ideas, Big Moves & Little Moves” to the Plan Commission. Mr. Hopkins stated the following substantive things about this section:

1. Big Move 3 | Little Move 3.3 – “Update or develop small area plans. Mr. Hopkins said that they need to figure out an example of what an area plan might do or might be about.
2. Big Move 4 “Strengthen Downtown Urbana’s Role as the Economic Driver” – Mr. Hopkins stated that he disagrees with the “the Downtown” as opposed to “an area”. The Development Opportunities Map makes clear that we have a focus for Economic Development staff as well as other people that includes things other than Downtown Urbana. He stated that secondary nodes, industrial development, and the CMU area is how the City is going to grow the City’s tax base. While the Downtown area is an important part of growing the tax base, it is not the only one.
3. Big Move 6 “Make Walkability a Top Priority” – Mr. Hopkins’s stated that this language is an improvement; however, he disagrees with the statement and finds it interesting that the first Little Move talks about “continuing to implement the 2020 Pedestrian Master Plan and 2016 Bicycle Master Plan”. There were some suggestions by different ones on how to improve the language; however, nothing was agreed upon.
4. Big Move 6 | Associated Metrics 6.3.2 “Has a Transportation Planner been hired...” – Mr. Hopkins said that if the City hires a Transportation Planner, he hoped that they would not only deal with walking.
5. Big Move 7 “Promote Incremental Development” – Mr. Hopkins stated that this move expresses confusion of incremental development and redevelopment. He explained that “infill” is putting something where there is nothing but within current development areas. “Redevelopment” is doing something where something has already been developed before. So, infill development and redevelopment are two potentially different things. He said that “incremental” can be at any size chunk and may have nothing to do with infill in the narrow sense or redevelopment.
6. Big Moves 8 (Invest in Infrastructure that makes Sense Financially and is Environmentally Resilient) and 9 (Increase Urbana’s Economic Vibrancy) – Mr. Hopkins said that there is sort of ambiguity about some things that should be put under the objectives or should be in both places because there is a subtle distinction between what is an objective and what is something to do. He identified some matches that they may play with. He felt they should identify “metrics” with the “objectives”, not just with the to-do-list because the to-do-list is now reorganized. The metrics are basically, “Have we done it”; and the objectives are what we are trying to accomplish. He said this will help narrow some of the metrics down so they may actually get done. Mr. Rose concurred with linking the metrics with the objectives. It implies that we are actually measuring important stuff. If we are going to use metrics, then it is kind of an investment in actually doing it rather than a checkbox of a Little Move accomplishment. Carol Mitten, City Administrator, added that they should include financial metrics. Discussion ensued about the importance of growing the City’s tax base.
7. Mobility/Transportation – Mr. Hopkins mentioned that this will come into the Plan. He said that the other pieces are there, and the redraft of the Plan gets close to imagining how we link two additional sections on the Land Use and the Mobility stuff.

Chair Allred stated that as he read the Big Ideas, Big Moves, and Little Moves, he thought about how the Plan Commission and Planning staff would use this to demonstrate the rational basis for making decisions on future rezoning or special use permit cases, etc. He said that it is much improved from the way it was originally written. He asked if in some cases, are we just citing the objectives in the Big Ideas. Sometimes there are things in the Little Moves that seem maybe they should be objectives underneath a Little Move. He used Big Move 1 | Little Move 1.8, which states “Allow a variety of housing types in every neighborhood at scales appropriate to each neighborhood” as an example of what should be an objective or policy rather than a Little Move. This particular Little Move would have been useful for the Plan Commission and Planning staff to have in the case of the Duplex Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Hopkins agreed and added that we need to be careful that it does not contradict our place types.

Chair Allred suggested that staff add a “B” to the Big Move items and “L” to the Little Move items, so that it reads “B.1.1” and “L.1.1.” to prevent confusion between the two when referencing.

Ms. Ruedi stated that once the Big Ideas, Big Moves, and Little Moves document is finalized, Planning staff will be able to print off and use it as a quick reference guide for supporting cases. Mr. Hopkins stated that it is also the complete reference guide because they do not have anything else at the moment. Ms. Ruedi said that the goal is to have everything the Plan Commission needs in this one section.

Chair Allred stated that there are too many metrics in some of the Moves. Some of them are not clear why they are in a particular section and what they are measuring. Ms. Ruedi explained this came from the original table format where the Move was right next to it, so it made sense but after they moved it into this format, it lost its meaning. So, staff needs to expound on them.

Chair Allred said that he believes some thought needs to be put into the feasibility of the metrics being able to be updated and to be assessed on a regular basis. It would be better to have a smaller set of metrics that staff can update and keep track of than it is to have a really exhaustive list that is updated once a year. Ms. Ruedi agreed and stated that the value is in the implementation of the metrics. Chair Allred added that we also need to think about what we are going to do with it, how does this get shared, and how does this become part of the decision-making process for the whole City.

Mr. Hopkins said that he would check the reference book for doing metrics for plans. He recalled that it says along the order of 10 metrics, not 100. Chair Allred pointed out that there are four Big Ideas, so that would be a couple of metrics for each big idea.

Mr. Rose asked what the impact of this comprehensive plan would be on the Zoning Ordinance. Do we expect to have piecemeal changes to the Zoning Ordinance? Mr. Garcia replied that it is written in the proposed *Imagine* Urbana Comprehensive Plan that the long-term plan is to rewrite the Zoning Ordinance, but it also is written that staff will be making incremental changes between now and then because a rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance might take a few years. Chair Allred mentioned that there are grants available for zoning reform.

**V. Next Steps**

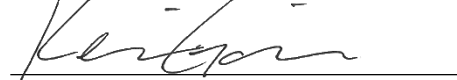
Mr. Garcia stated that the next steps are for staff to go back and make changes to the Big Ideas, Big Moves, and Little Moves section based on the Plan Commission's comments. Staff will continue to work with the Plan Commission and the University of Illinois students to refine things. Chair Allred said that the Plan Commission would like to see how some of these other things start to fit into the plan and what other content is needed to frame this information. Ms. Ruedi asked the Plan Commission members to email staff any future thoughts and ideas.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the Plan Commission should expect another Study Session on Mobility. Mr. Garcia explained that staff is using guides from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) for street design and bike ways. He will make changes while the students are away for the holidays and share them when the students return.

**L. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Garcia, Secretary  
Urbana Plan Commission