

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: November 7, 2024

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

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

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Will Andresen, Andrew Fell,

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

OTHERS PRESENT: David Huber, Audrey Ishii

A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:04 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 October 17, 2024 regular meeting was presented for approval. Mr. Rose moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Ms. Simms seconded the motion. The minutes was approved as written by unanimous voice vote.

D. COMMUNICATIONS

- Managing Speed for Safety – Safety Over Speed submitted by Audrey Ishii
- Schedule A of the Urbana Local Traffic Code submitted by Audrey Ishii
- Future Land Use Descriptions

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

Audrey Ishii, resident of the City of Urbana and member of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, approached the Plan Commission to comment on the Long Range Transportation Plan 2050. She commented that the draft *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan lays out the case very clearly that in order to have financial viability, Urbana is going to have to become a “bedroom” community. This means literally a community that hopes we have enough beds to cover our bills because of the very many tax exempt properties. While we are making our town a joy to live in, we are not making any cash contributions to running our city. So, if being a bedroom community in a residential haven is our best future, then we need to own it proudly. We can hope that with the beds, it will bring retail and night life.

She went on to say that one thing bedroom communities do to attract residents is by being a safe and welcoming community. Mahomet, Savoy, St. Joseph and Tolono have passed a 25 mph speed limit for their entire community in the last few years. This is just a step to make sure that people passing through their community as well as those who live in their community respect the residents who live there and also to see what retail their downtowns have to offer by traffic moving more at a human speed.

She noted that it is not sleepy suburbs that have passed 25 mph speed limits. Other bedroom communities like Cambridge, Massachusetts; Boston; Seattle; and Knoxville have lowered their speed limits to 25 mph. In fact, at least 22 states have a default urban residential speed limit for their entire communities. She said that in the west, you can travel on highways at 80 mph legally and then you hit a small town in the middle of nowhere, and it is 25 mph as you go through the downtown. You get to see everything they have and you see the people and can wave to them. Residents in those small towns are not going to put up with you coming in at 45-55 mph, even though the US highway engineers highly prize getting from community to community. She stated that the fatality rate has dropped on these highways since the 1970s and are now in our communities, especially on arterial streets and where we are living.

Ms. Ishii said that Crystal Lake, Illinois’ Public Works Engineering staff researched and passed a 25 mph speed limit in 2021. Their Ordinance provides an excellent model that the City of Urbana can follow.

She mentioned that Examine Urbana has a quote that says, “94% of households live within a half mile walk from a store”. It also says to “keep in mind that the distance to a destination is inexact. It does not mean a destination is accessible. Some roads in Urbana act as a barrier that many people cannot cross safely.” She referred to an illustration of East Main Street in Urbana, which shows someone walking in the narrow street because there is no sidewalk and no crosswalk for about a mile down the street. The speed limit is 35 mph. The street comes up to a blind curve,

and it spurs onto University Avenue. If you go straight, you hit a corner where the speed limit drops to 15 mph. and then you are on Pfeffer Road and the speed limit goes back up to 35 mph. Because this exceeds the statutory speed limit, every single side street has to have a 30 mph sign posted. If the City would move the 30 mph signs to East Main Street, the problem would be solved. She believes that the speed limit should be even lower than 30 mph. She talked about a fatality that happened in January of 2021. Tonia Barnett was trying to cross the street from her bus stop and was hit by a driver of a vehicle. The nearest crosswalk was a five-minute walk away, and because she was not in a crosswalk, she was not expected to be visible so no fault was assigned.

Ms. Ishii asked, do we need to wait for a sidewalk budget that will never come because East Main Street is a patchwork of non-City properties or are there actions that this walkable city should have already taken but cannot find the staff time and training to undertake. She thanked the writers of the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan for using this illustration and raising this point by using this specific illustration. She stated that the current Public Work's staff is not responsible for this East Main Street situation. She noted other pedestrian fatalities that have occurred on both Vine Street and on University Avenue.

She stated that if the City of Urbana wants to be walkable, then let us start with the most obvious and simple progressive steps we can take by lowering the speed limit to 25 mph. We have nothing to lose but our traffic casualties.

David Huber approached the Plan Commission to speak. He said that the City of Urbana's biggest failure is to protect public space. Extreme speed is an abuse of going 25 mph over the speed limit in a residential neighborhood. This is controlled through design and not by enforcement.

He talked about how the maps in the previous Comprehensive Plans tend to divide things along roads...such as wards, school districts, etc. He said because of this he is skeptical of neighborhood plans. He thought the City was trying to undue the "moats" between neighborhoods. Crossing the street should not be so hard, but it also should not be another "universe". So, he said he hates to see plans that assign districts along a road rather than creating public space. We should work on connecting neighborhoods.

Mr. Hopkins asked where Mr. Huber lives. Mr. Huber replied on Washington Street between Vine Street and Philo Road. He explained that his comments were not just regarding his street and that he was only using his street as an example. He said that the pattern of development or the period of time in which homes in a neighborhood were developed is not the way neighbors socialize. Mr. Hopkins stated that neighborhood boundaries are fuzzy and he argued about the idea of creating neighborhood plans before. He said that he agrees with Mr. Huber.

J. STAFF REPORT

Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, reported on the following:

- Plan Case No. 2493-T-24 – This case was forwarded to Committee of the Whole to be heard on Monday, November 4, 2024; however, this meeting was cancelled. So, Plan Case No. 2493-T-24 will be heard by the Committee of the Whole at a special meeting on Tuesday, November 12, 2024. He noted that Monday, November 11, 2024 is Veteran's Day Holiday.
- Hope Village Update – He stated that they have applied for some building permits and are either planning to or have already started building out the interior of the community center.

K. STUDY SESSION

Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan Draft

1. **Incremental Development, Infill & Annexation**
Big Move # 7 – Promote Incremental Development
2. **Walkability**
Big Idea # 3 – Urbana is a City of Connected Neighborhoods
Big Move # 6 – Make Walkability the Default Setting
3. **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, gave the staff presentation for this meeting's topics. They discussed the following:

I. **Recap: 9/19/2024 & 10/17/2024 Plan Commission Study Sessions**

Mr. Garcia said that the big takeaway from the Study Session held on September 19, 2024 was that we needed to:

- A. Add more principles and criteria to the plan to help us guide our decisions that would help us support the types of investments that we want to make to allow more housing,
- B. Add more of what we already know about housing to the plan: Breaden Belcher, Grants Division Manager, had mentioned things during his presentation that were not already in the plan that would be helpful to add,
- C. Tap into and aggregate housing data that is likely out there.

He mentioned that staff is adding more to the plan with regards to policy direction and such. Mr. Belcher has been reaching out to local housing providers that the City works with to see what additional data might be available. City staff has been sort of developing principles that would help guide our decision making going forward.

Regarding the October 17, 2024 Study Session, Mr. Garcia apologized for not having his notes. He recalled that from that meeting, Downtown Urbana is not the economic driver of the city, it is an economic driver, so staff is retooling the Big Move. He mentioned that another thing staff has been doing is editing the plan and tightening up the Big Moves based on feedback they have been receiving.

Mr. Hopkins commented that it would be valuable to share the incremental changes rather than close down communication for months and then have staff present the final product. Chair Allred added that he feels it has been effective to have to go through these in a way where the content is “chunked”, so they are not dealing with everything all at once. He believes it would be good to do this with the next round as well rather than being presented with a new draft of the entire plan. As staff completes making edits to the different sections, it would be great if staff shared those to the Plan Commission. Ms. Ruedi agreed this would be good. She mentioned that City staff has done some restructuring as well, so some things might be in a different place than they were before. She said that Mr. Garcia and herself have been meeting frequently to go through what the students had recently done on outlining the policy. Chair Allred responded that it would even be good to get an outline of the overall organization of the plan.

II. Discussion Topics

A. Incremental Development, Infill & Annexations

Mr. Garcia presented the definition for “incremental development” and explained that incremental development in an older neighborhood is going to look different than in Downtown Urbana. So, incremental development will not look the same over the entire city. He noted that incremental development is going back to how things were developed up until the past 70 years or so by developing one lot at a time, not building an entire neighborhood all at once. He referred to the Strong Towns movement, stating that their approach is focused on incremental development, and they have many resources to explain this concept in depth.

Chair Allred assumed that there will be a more fleshed out definition of “incremental development” in the plan. Mr. Garcia replied that is correct. Mr. Allred stated that another important piece of information, not captured in this definition is that incremental development is also about change over time in how structures are used. These types of changes are very much a part of incremental development as much as redevelopment of a single parcel. Mr. Garcia said that he would figure out a way to work this into the definition.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he understood the many small-scale investments to include anything including conversions, lot by lot small subdivision, etc. He felt this definition of incremental development is better than what staff had before. He added that one way to make incremental development work is to have frames for the big investments in order to know how to do the incremental development. For example, knowing where we have sewer capacity and knowing where the break point is that we need to add an interceptor matters even if we think of the development as happening lot by lot or street by street. So, where this gets fit into other parts of the plan, we have to make sure we do not undermine the notion of creating long-term frames for what in the long run includes big changes. He said sewers is the most obvious, but it also includes drainage, detention basins, street layouts, etc.

Chair Allred noted that mobility is important to think about too. When places are changing incrementally over time, we need to think through how the street networks that provides access to those places might need to change. He felt this leads into building out the Future Land Use descriptions a little more.

Mr. Rose believed it would be beneficial for the plan to provide guidance on what the City wants to do for both incremental development and big transformative development. Ms. Simms stated that she would want to talk about the differences equitably and strategically, because a community that has had systematic underinvestment might require something different than a community that has had lots of change over time, or a newer subdivision. If we think equitably, then we are going to give to the degree that the community needs, which might be a little more sometimes; and strategic, because it is aligned with our overall values.

Chair Allred stated that sometimes when people talk about incremental development, they also make a distinction between who is doing the development. Is it people from within the community or people coming into the community? Part of this is making sure that our Future Land Use descriptions address not just land use but they get into the character of the development so that we are sending the signal about what kind of development, incremental or transformative, that we want to see happen in these different areas. But if we also are serious about prioritizing

incremental development , then we should think about the policies on the economic development side to support local actors and provide resources and remove barriers where they exist.

Mr. Garcia stated that this was the intent, and staff had provided some language in the plan to state the City should make it easier for people to invest in their community. Chair Allred read that it says, “simplify the permitting process for residents to invest in their properties”. He said that there are policies to provide tax rebates for certain types of development in certain parts of the city. He suggested thinking through how this aligns with the idea of incremental development, particularly from an equity perspective, to make sure that we are matching those things up and not just thinking about how we can attract development in general, but how can we attract specific types of development in specific places. Mr. Garcia replied that part of the reality is that most local people do not have the capital to do big transformative developments, so it is most certainly going to be coming from outside the community. While these developments may be helping the City’s tax base, it is rental money that is leaving the community and not helping the community’s wealth as a whole.

Mr. Garcia presented the definition for “infill development”, which also includes Goal # 34 from the existing Comprehensive Plan. He said that this is not something new. Staff just wants to make sure that there is a common definition. He added that he likes using basic definitions as long as they work. Mr. Hopkins stated that he agrees with this notion for definitions. Some definitions may be a definition appendix similar to that in the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Garcia replied that he has added these definitions as placeholders. Ms. Ruedi added that in the online version, if you hover over a word, it will take you to the definition.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the definition and statement of encouraged development in areas where adequate infrastructure already exists is a more specific definition than infill development often connotes. So, he believes that we need to be clear in the plan that we are not taking a narrow view of what infill development means. He interprets the definition not to mean filling in vacant lots. He likes the way it is worded and believes it is a great concept. Mr. Garcia said that infill development could mean filling in vacant lots, but it does not mean it is the only type of development that is “infill”. He noted that infill development and incremental development are different things; however, they will often be the same [i.e.: development will often meet both definitions].

Chair Allred mentioned that the first Little Move in Big Move # 7 is to identify and resolve barriers to incremental and infill development. He suggested that they provide examples of incremental development of which infill development could be an example in the plan. He believes that they need to be specific when they talk about incremental and infill developments. He mentioned that there are examples they could use to show incremental development that is not also infill development. Mr. Garcia said that this goes back to when he said that it will look different in different neighborhoods. He said that the Historic Preservation Commission members had a great discussion when staff presented the draft *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan to them. As a result, staff will be working towards including some more nuanced historic preservation tactics that will dovetail with this conversation with the Plan Commission.

Mr. Garcia agreed that they should include illustrations of each development type. He noted one example of infill development is 200 South Vine Street. He noted one example of incremental

development would be the Gather at the corner of Lincoln and University Avenues. He stated that another part of incremental development involves the appropriate scale of a development.

Mr. Hopkins felt they should separate the conversations about definitions from communicating concepts and intentions in the plan. He argued that it makes no difference whether 200 Vine or the Gather is incremental or infill development. What matters is whether they can communicate in the plan what the City wants and whether they want a development like 200 Vine Street or a development like the Gather, so when the Plan Commission eight years from now has a case, they understand what the intent for that place was. He stated that the University of Illinois student teams are working on these questions and how to communicate these concepts.

Mr. Garcia presented and explained an illustration showing the least intense type of development on the left going up to more intense development on the right. Chair Allred gave his perspective of the illustration and stated that the commercial portion (bottom drawing) shows both time and space in terms of scale and type of development that's happening at different points. He gave a suggestion on how to improve the residential portion (top drawing) of the illustration.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he interprets the top drawing to show mixed residential, which would be okay. He would be okay if all the top row was built at once. Mr. Garcia replied that there are areas in the City where there is a lot of vacant land served by adequate infrastructure. He agreed that the City would be in favor of developing every use shown in the top row at once. However, this is not incremental development, which is what the illustration is intending to show. Chair Allred stated this is why the residential portion of the illustration does not work well to represent incremental development. One would not want to go from having a residential neighborhood that is mostly detached single family homes to suddenly having work spaces right next door. You would want this to be something that happens gradually over a very long time period. Mr. Garcia noted that the illustration is not going to be put in the plan, but was created to generate discussion. He said it would be nice to have a play button that shows lots going from being vacant to something getting built, then decays over time, and it being replaced with something else.

Mr. Garcia showed an illustration of "micro housing" from Strong Towns representing one solution to homelessness. He then showed a local building on Green Street that replaced a duplex. He mentioned that Green Street is in our Mixed-Office Residential (MOR) zoning district, which works well to achieve properly scaled, but also a mix of uses. He showed a picture of three houses on Washington Street, where a second unit was constructed on a lot that would only be noticeable for pedestrians walking by the lot. The next photo shows a single-family house that had been converted into a duplex. Chair Allred stated that the local examples better illustrate what they are thinking and what is likely to happen in our neighborhoods than the rendering.

Mr. Hopkins stated that we should explicitly say that we are talking about spatially fine-grained and small changes over time. He said that specific examples like the local photos carry a particular story that is not carried by the words "infill" and "incremental".

Mr. Garcia commented that they talk about West Urbana a lot; however, it is a neighborhood that was developed back before zoning rules. It was developed incrementally and had a mix of different housing types. These are all things that now are character defining elements of this neighborhood, which is what makes people love West Urbana. When development started being big and massive, and people were tearing down existing buildings along Lincoln Avenue and

putting up hideous apartment buildings, he understands why the neighborhood residents said to stop this. He said he believes that the challenge of what we want to do going forward is rather than trying to preserve neighborhoods exactly as they are, which is not healthy for any neighborhood, is to decide how to allow gradual, small changes over time so that the neighborhood can be healthy over the long run. He quoted a concept from Strong Towns that says “No neighborhood should be immune to change, but no neighborhood should experience dramatic change.” Chair Allred said that accomplishing this in the draft plan will be helped by adding more to the Future Land Use categories, so that we are describing the character of places and not just relying on land use. Mr. Hopkins added that it is not like we never do transformative changes, such as west of Lincoln Avenue, but there are times and places where we should allow this.

Mr. Garcia presented the Little Move that says we want to develop a fiscally-responsible annexation policy. He stated that the basic rationale is that annexations are often not incremental or infill development, which is what we want to promote. Also, many annexations are not going to be fiscally sustainable over their life cycles. So, many cities that have annexed a lot of land, as those areas get built out, the uses that get built do not really pay for the long-term maintenance of the infrastructure that is “gifted” to the City by the developer after it is built. He stated that the idea of developing a fiscally-responsible annexation policy is to make sure that if the City annexes property that we do it in a smart way, and not taking on essentially what will be a long-term burden in 30 to 40 years down the line from now. He pointed out that the City does not currently have a formalized process for analyzing annexations.

Mr. Hopkins commented that since we are re-doing the Comprehensive Plan, then we should be able to say something about the nature of such a policy and think about annexations over the last 50 years or so. Annexations in the past have often been for very different purposes. One was a political move to prevent the creation of a separate jurisdiction in northeast Urbana. Another was to attract Walmart. Another was related to how Frasca Field operates its airport. Somehow, we have to say something more elaborate than “fiscally responsible”. It comes across as too simplistic.

He mentioned that there is a specific agreement with the Sanitary District about annexation that is worth including in the draft Comprehensive Plan. The agreement has implications for strategy in terms of the Sanitary District being aware of how the Urbana boundary is not congruent with the School District boundary. This is relevant to decisions about annexations because in some cases where the City might benefit from annexing a property, the Urbana School District does not, especially on the north Industrial Zoning District.

He said that it should indicate that it is not that we have no idea of what is going on, which is what he interprets the draft one liner to mean. He stated that the annexation to prevent the creation of a separate jurisdiction had nothing to do with fiscal responsibility. In the case, where we annexed industrial used land in the north, it may have been fiscally responsible for the City but not for the Urbana School District, because that area falls under Champaign School District, but did not add any students to their district. We need to take this kind of annexation into account.

Mr. Hopkins also questioned whether staff considers “fiscally responsible” as a constraint or an attribute. He said that he considers it to be an attribute and feels that it certainly ought to be assessed and computed, but it is not the only attribute. He mentioned the fact that the City does not annex trailer parks because they are not “fiscally responsible”; however, one could argue in

other ways this is irresponsible because one way to change the metric on affordable housing within the City limits would be to annex three huge trailer parks and enable a land use type and a zoning category that allows them to be incremental development. People go from single-wide trailers to double-wide trailers, and some put trailers on foundations.

Mr. Rose said that he is not satisfied with the simple one-liner. It will take work to create better language.

B. Walkability

Mr. Garcia stated the rationale behind Big Move 6: Make Walkability the Default Setting. He said it means making things gradually better. He referenced a book titled “Walkable City” written by Jeff Speck and explained that he derived the definition of “walkability” from the book. He presented the definition of “walkability” to the Plan Commission noting that “For an area to be walkable, walking must be **useful, safe, comfortable** and **interesting.**” He said that Mr. Speck explains what each of these four qualities mean in his book, which is as follows:

- **Useful** – means that most aspects of daily life are located close at hand and organized in a way that walking serves them well.
- **Safe** – means that the street has been designed to give pedestrians a fighting chance against being hit by automobiles; they must not only be safe but feel safe.
- **Comfortable** – means that buildings and landscape shape urban streets into “outdoor living rooms,” in contrast to wide-open spaces, which usually fail to attract pedestrians.
- **Interesting** – means that sidewalks are lined by unique buildings with friendly faces and that signs of humanity abound.

Mr. Garcia showed photos of Springfield Avenue and pointed out areas in each photo that represents these four qualities. He showed a photo of a pathway through the parking lot at Vineyard Church and said this is one way to make things more walkable. Mr. Hopkins pointed out that the pathway does not connect to the street sidewalk. The pathway only serves the parking lot.

Ms. Simms noted that she likes walking from Silver Creek Restaurant to Downtown Urbana because you can walk along the Boneyard Creek. It is shaded and a great walkable experience. Mr. Garcia added that the artwork in the area is constantly changing, and mentioned that the City has added new tables and chairs people can use in the area.

Mr. Rose asked if the Boneyard Creek included in the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan as an asset. Mr. Garcia said that he was not sure how they would incorporate it into the plan.

Mr. Garcia showed a photo of Philo Road and mentioned that there is a huge gap in the sidewalk network that Public Works has started to fill in due to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Ms. Simms commented that this is a perfect place where if the speed limit is not moderated, she cannot see families walking with kids in this area.

Ms. Simms stated that she loved the examples that were given; however, when she thinks of walkability, she thinks about neighborhoods in communities that have been historically marginalized that tend to not be walkable. This leads her to think about safety (street lights), inviting spaces, things being cleared out, not having vacant lots because of all the complexity. She

said that she wants to include images of the kinds of things that were mentioned, but she wants to make sure that the neighborhoods that she might live in and exist in are also included in the vision. If they are not mentioned explicitly, then she interprets that staff is only talking about a certain kind of community. She said accessibility should be articulated as well. Mr. Garcia replied that he likes to write easily understood sentences, and it is hard to encapsulate all of this in one word. He said that the first paragraph of Big Move # 6 states, “walking includes people in wheelchairs and with other mobility impairments”.

Mr. Hopkins stated that this is in an inherent contradiction. He expressed concern about using the word “walkability” to convey a whole set of ideas, because people who do not know Jeff Speck’s books, think that walkability means walking. He further stated that we should not say that walkability is the default because there is another statement in the draft plan that is much closer to what we should say, which is that all development (or we could use another word) should account for walking, biking, driving, transit, and freight. Freight would include emergency access. Or we could say pedestrian, bicycling, automobiles, or whatever labels we want. Walkability is not about walking, but rather it is about walking where people are driving and driving where people are walking. It is about where the transit routes are, where the sidewalks area, and where the speeds are.

Mr. Hopkins stated that his interpretation of the focus of Jeff Speck is on streets like Springfield Avenue and Lincoln Avenue with five-story apartments with retail on the first floor. Retail on the first floor in Champaign and in Urbana does not work. Therefore, the walkability label and what it refers to is completely inadequate. He went on to say that we do not want to talk about walking. Instead, we want to talk about connection of neighborhoods by walking, biking, driving, etc. He said that he believes this entire Big Move needs to be reframed.

Mr. Garcia stated that the intent for this Big Move is to make a strong statement that they are most concerned with getting people around by walking. Mr. Hopkins stated that he disagreed that they should be concerned about the whole thing, not just people getting around by walking. Mr. Garcia asked if this could not be encapsulated in talking about connectivity in the other Big Move. Mr. Hopkins said yes, but they cannot have this Big Move be labelled “Walkability by Default”. Mr. Garcia said that he is fine with changing the label of this Big Move.

Mr. Hopkins stated that if staff wants to give examples, such as they did with the photo on Springfield Avenue, then they need to say here is how it works for pedestrians, here is how it works for automobiles, here is how it works for transit, here is how it works for bicycles, and here is how it works for freight, which includes emergency access. Mr. Garcia stated that often when plans are adopted, the plan will say it is going to focus on walking or complete streets. Afterwards, when development gets built, you might have a building that qualifies as complete street by whatever definitions are in the plan, but there is still traffic going 40 miles per hour and someone gets hit and killed. So, he wants to make sure that the City of Urbana is set up for success by really being explicit about what we are going for. Mr. Hopkins replied that walkability is about 25 mph speed limit, which is about cars. There is a statement in the draft plan that says, *all modes should be safe and convenient and comfortable*. This is the statement we should have because you cannot have safe pedestrians without safe drivers. So, we need to think about how all the modes of transportation work together.

Chair Allred agreed with Mr. Hopkins in that it is problematic with saying “Make walkability the default”. He suggested that staff step back and look at what they want to achieve as a community. We want to create environments where walking is safe. It is not that we are anti-car because most people drive at least part of the day to get where they are going. So, we are doing things that provides for the space in the public right-of-way so that all of these different multimodal uses/modes can cohabitate. He said that all four of things on the list (useful, safe, comfortable and interesting) have to do with surrounding land uses. The only places in Urbana that are walkable are Downtown Urbana and on the University of Illinois campus. So many of our residential neighborhoods do not have all of these other elements and are very unlikely and would face significant resistance from the people who live in those neighborhoods to changes that would make those places more walkable by the definition of Jeff Speck. This does not mean that we cannot make changes to improve the conditions of walking in these areas by putting in sidewalks and street lights and by addressing issues of vacant lots. He said that we have to be careful about the message we convey in the Comprehensive Plan, because so much of the value and use of the Plan is the message it sends to people who look at it.

Mr. Allred went on to say that staff talked about making new developments walkable. However, so few of these things related to walkability are addressed in any particular development. So much is about what happens in the public right-of-way and has to do with the things that we are building as the City; much less than it has to do with what a single development is doing on their particular parcel unless it is a major subdivision. Mr. Garcia stated that he would not want another development like Schnucks. It is horrible to walk to from any direction, except the southeast. So, the City approved the Schnucks Planned Unit Development with only one sidewalk connection from one direction. If another similar development was proposed, he said that he would want to have the backing of the Comprehensive Plan to require more walkable connections. Chair Allred noted that Schnucks is only walkable for a small portion of the population in Urbana. More people bike or drive to Schnucks. So, it has to do with the balance of these things. How do we accommodate and plan for and have regulations or site plan review to ensure that a development is accessible by multi means of transportation?

Mr. Garcia stated the reason for suggesting “Make Walkability the Default” was largely due to since World War II, we have made driving the default setting. This is why we now have most of Urbana that does not meet the definition of walkable. Chair Allred replied that it is as much a question of urban form as it is what happens on a particular site. You would have to have multiple Schnucks spread throughout the city or have the development of the city be much denser so that you have more people living within that half mile radius of the Schnucks for it to be really walkable.

Mr. Rose asked if the City has the authority to set speed limits everywhere in the City. Mr. Garcia stated that he did not know what the State law is; however, he believes that the State made some changes to allow a City to set a default speed limit citywide. He referred the question to Audrey Ishii, a member of the audience, who had spoken during Audience Participation of other cities around the City of Urbana who have already set a citywide speed limit. He added that just because a city changes the speed limit citywide to 20 mph does not mean that people will magically drive 20 mph because the streets were designed to drive 45 or 50 mph. However, it would be a start to change the speed limit.

Ms. Simms stated that she loves the broader conceptualization of all of the various ways that people can take advantage of spaces including walking, driving, transit, etc. So now, how do we

think about the most inclusive language? She feels all four of these things (useful, safe, comfortable and interesting) are important. She talked about her experience of walking to Schnucks when she did not have a car and how it was not designed for multiple means of transportation.

Mr. Rose stated that one way of selling walkability would be to assign someone to find walking paths through the City, and on the paths, identify beginnings of elements that meet these criteria. Ms. Simms stated that once a quarter, she has the lived experience of the people that she serves and supports. She will navigate going to the doctor or to work to see what is possible and feasible. This way she can advocate for something that she has experienced herself and is not just making up a story. She suggested that staff try to be in the city reflective of the values that they are trying to adhere to. Ms. Ruedi stated that they did do this for someone who gets around by wheelchair.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the City has a Pedestrian Master Plan. Mr. Garcia said yes. It was adopted in 2020. Mr. Hopkins stated that the adopted Pedestrian Master Plan is either going to be included in its current form in this Comprehensive Plan or is going to be incorporated by reference and annotation. Mr. Garcia added that the City is still implementing the 2016 Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. Both plans are still relevant. Mr. Hopkins suggested that staff incorporate the Pedestrian Master Plan by annotative reference, meaning staff should include a paragraph explaining what has been done in the plan, what has changed and has not changed, and how the plan relates to the content of other aspects of the proposed Comprehensive Plan and of the Bicycle Master Plan.

Mr. Hopkins explained that the attitude of the previous City Administration was that they should adopt the Bicycle Master Plan and the Pedestrian Master Plans as amendments to the existing Comprehensive Plan to give them more backing potentially for legal purposes. He said that he did not know if this is worth it because one advantage of keeping them independent is that we do not have to explicitly figure out how to update these plans when we create a new comprehensive plan. Mr. Garcia stated that it is on staff's task list to discuss how they are going to incorporate all of the other things that have been incorporated into our current Comprehensive Plan into the new proposed Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Ruedi pointed out that in the proposed Comprehensive Plan under Background and Trends, they do acknowledge existing plans and provide links to those plans. They need to provide more detail and state if these plans were adopted into the existing Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Hopkins stated that Silver and Vawter has missing street lights and sidewalks. As the Police Chief stated in a News-Gazette article that we are building sidewalks somewhere in the City, and staff is talking about walkability in Downtown Urbana and the campus area, he asked what the explanation is for why nothing has happened on Silver and Vawter. Mr. Garcia replied that he does not know. The City has completed some of our equity and quality of life projects to install street lights in areas that have historically been disinvested in. He mentioned that the proposed Comprehensive Plan does talk about focusing on the City's Community Development Target areas. Mr. Hopkins stated that the problem with target areas is that they are census tract or census block group, which sometimes do not include points where things actually need to be done. Mr. Garcia added that the City is in the process of updating the target areas based on the newer census data.

Mr. Hopkins commented that Jeff Speck's view of walkability includes a downtown higher density, partially commercial view of the world. Meanwhile the missing street lights and sidewalks on East Main Street, East University Avenue, Silver and Vawter, and on Lierman Avenue do not seem to

be the center of attention, and they should be. Ms. Simms added that three blocks over from Silver and Vawter, there are sidewalks, graduate students and other people who have been in the neighborhood for a long time. So, once you get past the apartment in those three blocks, the rest of the neighborhood is lovely. Those three blocks get put in the same neighborhood as the lovely area, so it gets missed and are underserved and under-represented.

Ms. Ishii said that there is an Equity and Quality of Life project for adding sidewalks and street lights on Silver between Fletcher and Philo Road. She believed that the sidewalks were being putting in now. The street lights have been delayed by the manufacturer.

Ms. Ishii stated that walking is fundamental to being a human animal. It would be okay to say in the Plan that walking is fundamental and will be a fundament of any project that we do because every single person eventually is a pedestrian or on an accessibility vehicle. Twenty percent of Urbana residents do not have access to a vehicle. She said that this is our opportunity to say we have human values in this town.

Ms. Ishii commented that the house on Washington Street is a perfect example to use. She pointed out that Paul's Bike Shop was started in the garage next to it before moving and expanding. She went on to say that having some variability in West Urbana with front yard setbacks is what makes the West Urbana Neighborhood Area (WUNA) so charming. She loves being closer to the street.

David Huber approached the Plan Commission to speak. He stated that the 2005 Comprehensive Plan has a Future Land Use designation of "residential urban pattern" north of Washington Street between Philo Road and Vine Street. South of Washington Street between Cottage Grove and Philo Road has a Future Land Use designation of "suburban residential pattern". He asked what the difference is because both areas have the same zoning with the same development regulations.

He noted that *Examine Urbana* had language talking about racial segregation and University Avenue being the dividing line between African American and white households. He feels that there is still a divider which makes it harder to get between the two sides. If we do not promote bridging this dividing line, then we are keeping people in geography that is convenient to some people and to keep other people from walking or mixing, essentially. He talked about the commercial zoned parcels on Washington Street that helps bridge the neighborhoods. Mr. Hopkins replied that we should be thinking about explicit nodes, and Washington and Philo to Washington and Lierman Avenue is one of the obvious ones. We could turn it into a really interesting corridor with the new Wellness Center, Brookens Administrative Center, Dart property being "available", and undeveloped land near Family Dollar. This is a node that has equity, transportation (transit, auto, and pedestrian traffic), and an opportunity because there is available land. So, we can add a statement of intent in the Comprehensive Plan of why we think these kinds of things should happen here.

Mr. Huber commented on incremental development, and how the City does not want another situation like Lincoln Square Mall, where one developer owns a large amount of contiguous land. It is about a developer ecosystem that needs different actors to perform different work, and how it relates to finance and what access to capital they have. He is not sure how to promote incremental development. He talked about how large scale developers operate financially in a different way than small developers, and how small developers cannot afford to be speculative like large scale developers can be. He talked about how small scale developers are less affected by business cycles.

He talked about the City's lack of zoning incentives and of the lack of ability to subsidize affordable housing. He talked about how he would like us to actually promote incremental development versus simply stating that we want to. He also talked about continuity versus diversity regarding the type of housing that is built on vacant lots. He said that when you do have a vacant lot, that's the time to add to the housing mix. He said that the Zoning Ordinance is not very good at detaching units or occupancy from form; we're not creating the housing types that are in demand.

He stated that with regards to walkability, the City needs to be more like the U of I campus. He felt that campus would be a good model in the Comprehensive Plan. There are many good design features for walkability, but at this point, we have a lot of driveways and detached garages and very few alleys. He said if you look at the images of the kinds of houses representing incremental development, they look like there is a certain pattern, and there are certain fundamental things to our City that make incremental development a challenge. So, how do we get there with what we have?

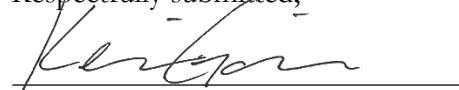
C. Future Land Use Categories

Mr. Garcia noted the time and stated that staff would bring the Future Land Use categories to the next regular meeting for the Plan Commission to review and discuss. Mr. Hopkins suggested that staff also provide an update on revisions that staff has made to the draft plan at the next meeting. Chair Allred added that there is some content that does not exist in the draft, and they will need to think about where it fits like the Mobility Maps and other relevant maps.

L. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission