



# CITY OF URBANA PLAN COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

**DATE:** Thursday, October 03, 2024  
**TIME:** 7:00 PM  
**PLACE:** 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801

## AGENDA

**A. Call to Order and Roll Call**

**B. Changes to the Agenda**

**C. Approval of Minutes**

[Minutes](#) of the September 19, 2024 Regular Meeting

**D. Communications**

**E. Continued Public Hearings**

**Plan Case No. 2493-T-24** – A request by David Huber to amend Article VI of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to eliminate lot width and area requirements for two-family dwelling in the R-2 (Single-Family Residential) and R-3 (Single- and Two-Family Residential) Zoning Districts.

{NOTE: Continued to the October 17, 2024 Plan Commission Regular Meeting}

**F. Old Business**

**G. New Public Hearings**

**H. New Business**

**I. Audience Participation**

**J. Staff Report**

**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 and Big Move # 6 - Make Walkability the Default Setting

3. Future Land Use Descriptions

**L. Adjournment**

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

The City of Urbana welcomes Public Input during open meetings of the City Council, the City Council's Committee of the Whole, City Boards and Commissions and other City-sponsored meetings. Our goal is to foster respect for the meeting process, and respect for all people participating as members of the public body, city staff, and general public. The City is required to conduct all business during public meetings. The presiding officer is responsible for conducting those meetings in an orderly and efficient manner.

Public Input will be taken in the following ways:

### **Email Input**

In order to be incorporated into the record, emailed public comments must be received prior to 5:00 pm on the day preceding the meeting and sent to the following email address: [Planning@urbanaininois.us](mailto:Planning@urbanaininois.us). The subject line of the email must include the words "PLAN COMMISSION - PUBLIC INPUT" and the meeting date. Emailed public comments labeled as such will be incorporated into the public meeting record, with personal identifying information redacted.

### **Written Input**

Any member of the public may submit their comments addressed to the members of the public body in writing. If a person wishes their written comments to be included in the record of Public Input for the meeting, the writing should so state. Written comments must be received prior to the closing of the meeting record (at the time of adjournment unless otherwise noted).

### **Public Hearing**

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony may speak during each public hearing at the time they appear on the agenda. This shall not count towards regular Public Input for the meeting. The Public Hearing is an opportunity for comments and questions to be addressed specific to each case. Board or Commission members are permitted to respond and engage during this time and/or the Chairperson may direct the applicant to respond during rebuttal. Comments unrelated to any of the public hearings listed on an agenda should be shared during the Public Input portion of the meeting where Verbal Input guidelines shall apply.

### **Verbal Input**

Protocol for Public Input is one of respect for the process of addressing the business of the City. Obscene or profane language, or other conduct that threatens to impede the orderly progress of the business conducted at the meeting is unacceptable.

Public comment shall be limited to no more than five (5) minutes per person. The Public Input portion of the meeting shall total no more than one (1) hour, unless otherwise shortened or extended by majority vote of the public body members present. The presiding officer or the city clerk or their designee, shall monitor each speaker's use of time and shall notify the speaker when the allotted time has expired. A person may participate and provide Public Input once during a meeting and may not cede time to another person, or split their time if Public Input is held at two (2) or more different times during a meeting.

The presiding officer or public body members shall not enter into a dialogue with citizens. Questions from the public body members shall be for clarification purposes only. Public Input shall not be used as a time for problem solving or reacting to comments made but, rather, for hearing citizens for informational purposes only.

In order to maintain the efficient and orderly conduct and progress of the public meeting, the presiding officer of the meeting shall have the authority to raise a point of order and provide a verbal warning to a speaker who engages in the conduct or behavior proscribed under “Verbal Input”. Any member of the public body participating in the meeting may also raise a point of order with the presiding officer and request that they provide a verbal warning to a speaker. If the speaker refuses to cease such conduct or behavior after being warned by the presiding officer, the presiding officer shall have the authority to mute the speaker’s microphone and/or video presence at the meeting. The presiding officer will inform the speaker that they may send the remainder of their remarks via e-mail to the public body for inclusion in the meeting record.

### **Accommodation**

If an accommodation is needed to participate in a City meeting, please contact the City at least 48 hours in advance using one of the following methods:

Phone: 217.384.2455

Email: [hro@urbanaillinois.us](mailto:hro@urbanaillinois.us)

### **Watching the Meeting via Streaming Services**

All City meetings are broadcast on Urbana Public Television and live-streamed on the web. Details on how to watch are found on the UPTV webpage located at <https://urbanaillinois.us/upty>.

## MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

### URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

### DRAFT

**DATE:** September 19, 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, Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Debarah McFarland, Bill Rose, Karen Simms, Chenxi Yu

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Will Andresen

**STAFF PRESENT:** Breaden Belcher, Grants Management Manager; Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner; Carol Mitten, City Administrator; Hillary Ortiz, CD Executive Assistant; Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development

**OTHERS PRESENT:** David Huber

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#### A. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:01 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 September 5, 2024 regular meetings were presented for approval. Mr. Rose moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Ms. Simms seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written by unanimous voice vote.

#### D. COMMUNICATIONS

- ❖ Emails received in support of Plan Case No. 2493-T-24:
  - Phil Fiscella dated Monday, September 16, 2024
  - Matthew Macomber dated Wednesday, September 18, 2024
  - Adani Sanchez dated Wednesday, September 18, 2024
  - Cameron Raab dated Wednesday, September 18, 2024
- ❖ Emails received in opposition of Plan Case No. 2493-T-24:
  - Esther Patt dated Wednesday, September 18, 2024
  - Liz Cardman dated Wednesday, September 18, 2024
- ❖ *Imagine Urbana* - Urbana Plan Commission Future Discussion Topics

## **E. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were none.

## **F. OLD BUSINESS**

There was none.

## **G. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**Plan Case No. 2493-T-24 – A request by David Huber to amend Article VI of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to eliminate lot width and area requirements for two-family dwellings in the R-2 (Single-Family Residential) and R-3 (Single- and Two-Family Residential) Zoning Districts.**

Chair Allred opened the public hearing for Plan Case No. 2493-T-24. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner, presented the staff report to the Plan Commission. He began by stating the purpose for the proposed text amendment. He gave a brief history on existing duplexes in the R-2 and R-3 Zoning Districts. He showed the maps in Exhibit C from the written staff report, which shows where duplexes in the City meets and does not meet the additional minimum lot dimensions in the R-2 and R-3 Districts. He reviewed the applicant's responses to questions in the text amendment application. He reviewed the proposed changes to Section VI-3. Lot Area and Width and to Table VI-3. Development Regulations by District. He explained how the proposed text amendment would relate to the goals and objectives of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. He read the options for the Plan Commission and presented staff's recommendation for approval. He stated that the applicant was in the audience and could answer questions.

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

Mr. Hopkins read Section VI-3. A. Lot Area and Width of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance out loud. He said that what this means (but not what it says) is that if we have a building and a use in place on a lot that does not meet the requirements for R-2 or R-3 and if the lot was platted before 1950, then it is not considered a non-conforming use. He said that he did not think it is intended to mean what it appears to say until the last sentence suggests otherwise that one could change the use. If you interpret this one way, then we do not need the text amendment because the Zoning Ordinance already says that one can change the use on lots platted before 1950. However, he did not believe that it means what the Zoning Ordinance says. Mr. Garcia replied that he thinks it means what it says but that what it says is not exceedingly clear. The language about "otherwise herein" means if there are any exceptions somewhere else, then that trumps the rule, so the exceptions for duplexes in R-2 and R-3 districts are spelled out in Paragraph B.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he is trying to figure out where we end up if they approve the proposed text amendment. If they remove these other two, this applies to changes of use or building on lots pre-1950 without meeting the width and size requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, which is a minimum of 6,000 feet, and have an average width no less than 60 feet. So, no lot if it is less than 6,000 square feet, even if they approve the proposed text amendment, could actually be changed to a duplex because that would be a use change, which would have to meet the Zoning Ordinance requirements. Mr. Garcia said that is not correct. Paragraph A is acknowledging that in Historic West or Historic East Urbana there are many lots that do not conform to the City's current area and

width standards. It is saying that you can still use those for any use that is allowed in that district, even if it is a substandard lot size. Most of the existing areas with substandard lots reflects when they were platted. Mr. Hopkins stated that by deleting Paragraphs B and C, we would be deleting the requirements for a 6,000-square foot lot and a 60-foot-wide lot, which is the district requirement regardless of use for districts R-2 and R-3. Mr. Garcia noted that Paragraph A is crucial to the outcome of putting anything on any really old lot. Paragraphs B and C are the exceptions so that we do not put duplexes on a lot that does not meet the minimum requirements.

Mr. Hopkins asked for confirmation if this only applies to lots platted prior to 1950. Any lot platted after 1950 still has to meet the 6,000-square foot minimum. Mr. Garcia said that this is correct.

Mr. Hopkins asked if lots platted before 1950 that are under 6,000 square feet are shown on Exhibit C as duplexes not being allowed. Mr. Garcia said it is the lots before December 21, 1970 that are shown on the map as being not developable as a duplex. Mr. Hopkins asked for confirmation that only the lots platted before 1950 and under 6,000 square feet will be allowed to be developed as duplexes if the proposed text amendment is approved, not between 1950 and 1970. Mr. Garcia said that is correct. Mr. Hopkins stated that before 1950, lots could be under 6,000 square feet and 60 feet wide. After 1950, lots would have to be a minimum of 6,000 square feet and at least 60 feet wide.

Chair Allred wondered why if they are proposing changes to allow duplexes, why not allow two-unit common lot line units the same relief from restrictions? Mr. Fell stated that a duplex is a very different thing than a two-unit common lot line unit. Duplexes can be stacked. A common lot line development in what is the minimum standard lot is really hard mostly because of open space and trying to provide parking on it. Duplexes and common lot line developments are dealt with differently in the Building Code and in the Zoning Ordinance. Chair Allred said that they could remove those requirements; and if it was not economical to construct it on the standard size lot, then that would be left up to the developer or the land owners. Mr. Garcia said yes.

Mr. Rose asked if they were looking for an end product that is independent of the time the land was platted. Mr. Garcia stated that he would love to get rid of anything that has to do with when it was platted or not.

Chair Allred asked if staff's recommendation would change based on what is in the current draft Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Garcia replied that, if anything, it would be a stronger recommendation for making the proposed changes because we are talking about incremental development and infill development in the draft plan.

Mr. Rose asked if there was material in Section VI-3 of the Zoning Ordinance that the City wished to maintain. Mr. Garcia stated that is important to retain Paragraph A because it does say that if you have a lot that does not meet the current requirements you can still develop it if it is old. Paragraph D is about the MOR (Mixed Office Residential) Zoning District. He feels that it has been effective in keeping development in the MOR District from being too massive. He agreed with Chair Allred that they may want to get rid of the wording about common lot line dwelling units.

Mr. Rose asked if Paragraph A could be reworded so that it is independent of the year of platting. Mr. Garcia responded saying that no matter how it is reworded, they may have to put a date in it.

With there being no further questions for City staff, Chair Allred opened the hearing for public input. He reviewed the procedure for public input. He invited the applicant to speak on behalf of his application for a text amendment.

David Huber, applicant, approached the Plan Commission to speak. He stated that as the applicant he had to make a political decision about how much to include in the text amendment. He does not want to undermine the core reason for the amendment, which is to eliminate lot area and width to allow duplexes to be constructed on lots platted prior to 1950. However, if the Plan Commission wants to include common lot lines, then he is willing to make it work.

He noted that the Land Development Code has a ratio that is different and supersedes the Zoning Ordinance. It is a one-to-three ratio of width to depth for a lot.

Mr. Huber stated that he lives in Urbana and works with the Zoning Ordinance a lot. He would like to think of it as a real model of what the City should be like. Someone who works with the document and has the right to propose an amendment to it can do so.

He talked about the particular economics of doing an infill development as a single-family house when there is an existing house on the lot. There are costs for demolishing the existing house and possible costs for repairing the sewer line or adding an additional sewer line. While there is the Think Urbana program which gives tax subsidies and sales tax abatements on building materials, it is quite expensive to get a lot to where it can be built on. Without substantial investment, a developer or property owner cannot meet the requirements of the Building Code or the Rental Code.

He said that he did not believe the proposed text amendment would unleash the tearing down of occupied properties. The proposed text amendment is not just about redevelopment of a lot. It could be for someone wanting to add a second unit or studio on to their existing house.

He wondered why there is a minimum lot width and area for lots in the R-2 and R-3 Zoning Districts. If the proposed text amendment is not approved, then how can the existing language be substantiated. He stated that he can build a duplex on a lot that is less than 6,000 square feet and less than 60 feet wide. As a developer, he can make the economics work and the units are desirable to people to want to rent. He did not know if there is still anyone around that understands how this came to be.

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

Ms. Simms stated that there seems to be a lot of moving parts, and she wants to make sure that the parts flow. She does not want to make a change that has an implication somewhere else.

Mr. Rose said that if the Plan Commission feels there is a sense that a modification of width and area is appropriate, then they are left to decide between approval or approval with modifications.

Mr. Hopkins agreed with Ms. Simms. He said the general objective makes sense but there is a lot of history and a lot of complexity to where all the width and area requirements come from, so he wants to think more of it through. He started talking about specific areas in the City, beginning with Lincoln and Bradley Avenues. Given the history of this neighborhood, he is not sure allowing

duplexes would benefit the neighborhood because it would turn even more of the lots into rental properties.

He noted the difference between a duplex and a common lot line dwelling is ownership. A duplex by definition is rented because it is two dwelling units and one owner. Whereas, a common lot line dwelling is more likely to be owner occupied. They do not know the rate of which duplexes would be constructed, and they would not be able to allow a certain number of duplexes on a block without allowing more because it would change the neighborhood. Mr. Garcia said that one of the criteria the Zoning Board uses to make a determination on a conditional use permit is whether it will alter the character and what impact it would have on the neighborhood. A conditional use is only required for duplexes in the R-2 District. Duplexes would be allowed by right anywhere in the R-3 Zoning District. Mr. Hopkins stated that the Plan Commission may want to consider adding common lot line dwellings to this text amendment to take into account the ownership rental question.

Mr. Hopkins pointed out that it is not terribly difficult to create a duplex out of an existing building that is in good shape. If you create a duplex out of an existing building in the City of Urbana, you go from four unrelated renters to eight unrelated renters. This, again, will potentially change the character of the neighborhood. When we talk about zoning, one of the attributes is how are we accounting for change in a zoning district, which has to deal with non-conforming use rules and how we imagine change occurring without ending up where we do not want to. Therefore, he would like to rewrite Section VI-3 to be as clean as we can get it. He added that common lot line dwellings and duplexes cannot be separate buildings. He talked about the possibility of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and making sure that they get the right mix of the right types of housing in the right places.

Ms. Simms asked if the proposed language prohibit condos, which look like a duplex but each unit is owned by different people. Mr. Garcia said no. The proposed text amendment would not prohibit condos. Ms. Simms said that it does not always mean that we would be creating more rental property then. Mr. Garcia explained that a duplex is two dwelling units on one lot. A common lot line dwelling is two units in one building; however, it is split into two lots. A property owner could condoize a common lot line dwelling, but he did not think they could turn a duplex into a condo.

Mr. Rose wondered if the Comprehensive Plan would take into account the issues of decreasing home ownership and increasing rentals, and if using the Comprehensive Plan as a guide would be sufficient. Chair Allred stated that the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and the draft of the new Comprehensive Plan both talk about wanting to have a variety of housing types in every neighborhood. Ms. Yu stated that she was in favor of turning run down homes into duplexes, because it does not make sense for the houses to be sitting there without a way to develop them. However, she did not want to create a way for people to be incentivized to change the use of single-family houses into duplexes. Mr. Garcia showed maps from Exhibit C for West Urbana and for East Urbana. He noted that there already are 66 legally non-conforming duplexes in the West Urbana area. Chair Allred reiterated that in the R-2 Zoning District, a duplex would only be allowed with the approval of a conditional use permit. Any property owner in the R-3 District could convert an existing home or build a duplex by right. Right now, we just have arbitrary lot size restrictions that are limiting duplexes to some degree.

Mr. Fell stated that as an architect, he would be in favor of waiving all of the minimum lot requirements for width and area as long as the developer meets all of the other development



requirements. Chair Allred said that the proposed text amendment does not waive the requirements for lot area and lot width; instead, it is making the requirements the same as for a single-family home. Mr. Hopkins corrected by saying that it does waive the requirements for lots the zones shown on the map where the lots were platted before 1950. Mr. Garcia added that is for any use allowed in those zones.

Mr. Hopkins talked about the rate of change and mentioned that they need to be clear and it is worth thinking about. Chair Allred commented that if the history of an area includes an exclusionary intent to keep people out of their neighborhood based on family status or based on income levels, then that is something they should try to remedy when they have the opportunity. So, that is why the proposed text amendment is something that the City should be considering.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he agrees. Part of what makes the West Urbana neighborhood an American Planning Association (APA) Great Neighborhood is indeed the mix of housing that it has. It has family housing, a walkable elementary school, a mix of people, and is walkable to work and to Downtown Urbana. He was trying to think through how to get a mix, not how to enable one set of things.

Ms. Simms wondered if this goes back to the Comprehensive Plan where we want neighborhoods to be diverse and have a mix of different types of housing opportunities and where we could still prioritize equity initiatives. Does the Comprehensive Plan say enough about this that when decisions are made, we reference it? Is it aligned with the overall vision of where they are trying to go? Ms. Yu stated that she likes the way Ms. Simms said this. She asked if the text amendment fits into the scenario we want it to be? Mr. Rose asked what is the guide that is going to promote rehabilitation. To implement rehabilitation of housing in priority neighborhoods strikes him as the Comprehensive Plan's distillation of these issues done well or poorly. Ms. Yu stated that if the Comprehensive Plan does not have enough language about promoting home ownership, then maybe that is something they should add to the draft *Imagine Urbana*.

Mr. Hopkins pointed out that he is not promoting home ownership. He is promoting mixed neighborhoods, and if they are doing that through zoning, then there are five attributes: 1) the activity that occurs, 2) the form that occurs, 3) interdependence among things, 4) the ownership, and 5) change. As he mentioned before, he would like to do a revision of Section VI-3 with enough stated intent about all of that to suggest how we want to enable neighborhoods to adapt to changing circumstances in a way that they have thought through. He does not think that they have to wait for the Comprehensive Plan to be updated. It would be inherently about lot area and width but is about adaptation of lot requirements related to changes in neighborhoods where rehabilitation renewal cannot happen for a set of rules that are in the way.

Ms. Yu said she agreed with Mr. Hopkins. She said it is a big issue, and just crossing out two articles will not solve the issues. If we really want to reimagine our zoning code in this area, we should take the approach Mr. Hopkins is recommending.

Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission send the proposed text amendment to City staff to revise Section VI-3 to address changes in area lot width, common lot line, condo, and duplex adaptation in the R-2 and R-3 Zoning Districts. Ms. Yu seconded the motion.

Mr. Rose stated that he felt the motion needed guidance from the Plan Commission to City staff.

Chair Allred stated that during discussion he heard concern about the balance between home ownership versus rental within certain neighborhoods. He asked why Section VI-3. Lot Area and Lot Width be the section of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to deal with this in particular. Mr. Hopkins stated that Section VI-3 was the area of focus, but he is trying to get at using the five attributes to figure out how we are dealing with the expectation of change. Chair Allred stated that he did not feel that Section VI-3 is the place to deal with this, but rather in Article V. Use Regulations or where it would be appropriate to spell out requirements for a conditional use permit or consider criteria. Mr. Garcia stated that Article VII. Standards and Procedures for Conditional and Special Uses has separate conditional use criteria that we can spell out for different things. Mr. Hopkins stated that Section VI-3 is the entry point because they need to look at the definitions of R-2 and R-3, which requires a lot to have 6,000 feet minimum for area and a 60-foot minimum width. He felt it is worth doing a little more complete task that makes it cleaner and more obvious where they are heading.

Mr. Garcia stated that Big Move # 2 in the *Imagine Urbana* draft is about rewriting the Zoning Ordinance to match the intent of the revised Comprehensive Plan. He stated that the appropriate time to deal with some of the larger issues would be after the new Comprehensive Plan is adopted and staff gets involved in the process of rewriting the whole Zoning Ordinance. The proposed changes in this application seem like a basic text amendment to him. There are two zoning districts (R-2 and R-3) that say duplexes should be allowed. The R-2 District allows duplexes with approval of a Conditional Use permit. The maps in Exhibit C show that there are tons of places within those districts that do not align with what the current Zoning Ordinance says. He suggested that the Plan Commission approve the proposed text amendment, maybe including common lot line as well because it has the same criteria and rules as for duplexes. Then, they tackle the larger issues in the not-so-far future.

Mr. Rose stated that the motion on the table is to direct the staff to conduct a rewrite of Section VI-3. If this passes the staff will get back to us with a rewrite, but I think we need to give direction for this rewrite to staff now. If the direction is to have staff clean up the language, then that would have his strong support. He said that he would hate to have the issue falter for staff not broadening the issues that are on the table right now.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he would interpret a concise response, roughly what Mr. Garcia just described, which is an explanation that clarifies the wording so they know what the outcome actually is and how Section VI-3. A relates to the others and deals with a common lot line in the same way. By putting the two together, it actually addresses many of the concerns the Plan Commission had talked about. What makes the expectation appear to be something massively more than this is that City staff has to make sure that the changes are not contradicted somewhere else in the Zoning Ordinance. He is not expecting a housing study to be done in order to make changes at this time.

Ms. Simms asked how difficult it would be to simplify the changes they are requesting. Mr. Garcia said it should only take two weeks and he could bring it back at the next regular meeting of the Plan Commission. Mr. Garcia stated that in the draft *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan, one of the Little Moves is that one does not have to wait. You can make little changes to the Zoning Ordinance as issues arise.

Ms. Yu asked if this application was not submitted by the applicant, would staff have intended to bring this text amendment to Plan Commission. Mr. Garcia replied that he would count the issue of the lot width and lot area preventing duplexes in the R-2 and R-3 Zoning Districts as one painful

thing among many in the Zoning Ordinance. City staff has a list of about 70 or more changes that would make the Zoning Ordinance better. Chair Allred pointed out that Big Move # 7, Little Move # 1 is to identify and resolve barriers to incremental and infill development. He believed the proposed text amendment would help resolve a barrier to infill development by allowing more duplexes. Mr. Garcia commented that while he knew duplexes were being prevented in certain areas by substandard lots, he did not realize how much of an issue it is until he was creating the maps for Exhibit C.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

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

The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 7-0.

## H. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

## I. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

David Huber addressed the Plan Commission on some comments that were made during the public hearing for Plan Case No. 2493-T-24. He stated that there is nothing legally that stops a single-family house from being converted into a rental property.

If duplexes are so egregious, he asked, why did not the neighborhood downzone the lots in the neighborhood to R-1 (Single Family Residential)? He hoped that the City can align the zoning districts with the other mechanisms of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the south part of the state streets starting at Michigan Avenue is zoned R-1. The West Urbana area residents have been battling this for 50 years and one of the reasons the rest of the West Urbana area is not zoned R-1 is because part of the historical claim that it has not been single-family only.

## J. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Garcia reported on the following:

- *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan neighborhood meetings have concluded. The attendance has been good, and people have been giving good comments and feedback. He mentioned that he might take the information and present it at one of the Night Markets on a Thursday night to see if he can get more input from Urbana residents.

## K. STUDY SESSION

***Image Urbana* Comprehensive Plan Draft – Discuss Big Move 1: Develop a Plan to Address Urbana’s Diverse Housing Needs**

Breaden Belcher, Grants Management Manager, addressed the Plan Commission on what the Grants Management Division does in terms of housing and how the Comprehensive Plan would be used as an important tool for both short and long-term goals and objectives of the Grants Division and for the Community Development Services Department. He mentioned that he would also talk about some of the areas where the City needs additional research and additional analysis in order to address the issues that some residents have made staff aware of.

He talked about the following:

- What Grants Management Division Does
  - Manage over \$10 million in annual grant funds
  - Focus on affordable housing, and community development needs with a focus on low-income residents
- Residents Comments about Housing Needs in the Community
  - Housing geared towards student
  - Increasing rent
  - Lack of housing supply and increased demand in neighborhoods
  - Difficulty finding a decent place to live that is affordable
- What We Know
  - Housing age & condition
  - Population characteristics
  - Increasing costs
- What We Need to Study
  - Housing & workforce trends
  - Gaps
  - Affordable & workforce housing needs
  - Fair housing
- Housing and the Comprehensive Plan
  - Clear, transparent process for addressing housing needs
  - Ensure responsible & effective use of resources
  - Align zoning & land use with housing goals & objectives
- Impact of Little Moves in the Comprehensive Plan
  - Help foster housing diversity, availability and affordability
    - Align goals with funding
    - Enhance equity in housing
    - Improve housing conditions
    - Strengthen partnerships with local housing providers
    - Attract housing developers

Chair Allred stated that Mr. Belcher talked mostly about the connection between housing and land use and zoning and spatial planning. We don't just need housing at different price points at different affordability but we need to think about where that housing goes, what sort of capacity does the City currently have to absorb that housing, and where do we need to build infrastructure to support the housing needed. He said it would be great to see what Mr. Belcher said show up in not just the kind of to-do list items but also in the principles or the criteria that would be used to guide decisions that would support those kinds of investments to allow that housing to happen.

Ms. Simms wondered what the City's process is for taking available data and leveraging that data in our execution. Sometimes it is just aggregating data and not having to do another study.

Mr. Belcher thanked Mr. Allred and Ms. Simms for their feedback. He noted that the City is not necessarily a service provider. We are a funder of these projects, so he is thinking about what the broader plan is to build on specific interventions that we need to make. Bringing all of the stakeholders to the table is a critical part of the research that needs to go into developing that strategy because any sort of solution will require collaboration.

Carol Mitten, City Administrator, stated that the City is interested in having a comprehensive sense of housing needs because we have a lot of participants in the space of providing affordable housing at various levels, and anecdotally we know we need more affordable housing and more opportunities for market rate housing of various types. What we do not know is what we have on the ground, where it is located, and what are the gaps in these different levels. We want to work against concentrations of poverty and work towards greater diversity of housing types that can lead to affordability. We also want to make sure that the tools we create don't get misdirected because we didn't control them. One of the things that is in *Imagine Urbana* is a comprehensive housing study; because to our knowledge, no one has done one across the full spectrum of affordability, including market rate, and it has not been anchored in the geography that will inform and be an intersection.

Ms. Mitten stated that the text amendment the Plan Commission reviewed at this meeting is a great example of not only thinking about density and housing types but what the economy is informing about that. We learned from the applicant, who is someone who has a lot of experience, that here is how this happens in real life. It has to be a piece of property that is heavily deteriorated, and the City wants to change.

Ms. Simms said that because we live in a university town, she anticipated that there is more available data that just needs to be aggregated than not. Every semester, the University staff send tons of students to collect information for research projects. She stated that there is so much redundancy in collecting data. We do not need to start from square one collecting data. We just need to find out who has already done the research and pull the data into one report. Mr. Belcher stated that he appreciated this. This has been a barrier on moving forward on things. He asked that if Ms. Simms knows people working on projects regarding housing to please pass them his contact information so they can get in touch with him.

Mr. Hopkins stated that connection to the spatial pattern for the things that Mr. Allred was saying and the data to do it as Ms. Simms was saying, we should be able to use that in the next couple of months to make more actively, in the Comprehensive Plan, the implications of some of this so that we are not starting out that the first move is to do a plan. The first move in a plan being to do a plan is not a good move. We ought to be putting to work what we already know; and clearly, we have a housing consolidated study.

Ms. Simms stated that she noticed the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan draft prioritizes developers; however, there are a lot more people who should be included in that prioritization. Sometimes, we get siloed in our thinking. Sometimes, we do not get to the objectives that we need to because we are missing important pieces, and then we bring them to the table too late. So, when thinking about mixed income housing or comprehensive housing development, we should talk to landlords. There are so many other variables, that she does not want us to miss the mark. We really need to think well about who is at the table, how do we get there, how do we make sure that we are asking the right questions, etc.

Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Development, stated that one of the things from an economic development perspective that we are lacking is that information on what our community really needs in the forms of attracting developers in Urbana. We are in this information rich community where there is a lot of data out there, but there has not been a consolidated effort to bring that data together into a useful tool for our community.

Chair Allred stated that it would be great to know a little more than what seems to be expressed in the plan about what the housing situation is. It is a missed opportunity not to include what we know to shape the goals and objectives that then allow the Plan Commission and City Council to use the Comprehensive Plan to make decisions that come before them. If a big chunk of this Big Move is to do a study, then we are missing the opportunity to incorporate important information in the current plan.

Ms. Yu said that we are sitting here anticipating/guessing what our community needs based on our neighborhoods and observed knowledge. It feels like we do not have enough information to help us to understand what is going on in our community and makes it difficult for the Plan Commission and City Council to deliberate on important cases.

#### **L. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Garcia', is written over a horizontal line.

Kevin Garcia, Secretary  
Urbana Plan Commission