



CITY OF URBANA PLAN COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

DATE: Thursday, March 13, 2025

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

D. Communications

[Communications](#) Received from Public regarding Plan Case No. 2502-CP-25

E. Continued Public Hearings

F. Old Business

G. New Public Hearings

[Plan](#) Case No. 2500-T-25 - A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend regulations in Article VI of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance allowing porches and porch stairs to encroach into a required yard.

Plan Case No. 2502-CP-25 - A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to adopt the *Imagine Urbana* Comprehensive Plan (Available online at <https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/urbana-il>)

H. New Business

I. Audience Participation

J. Staff Report

K. Study Session

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@urbanail.gov**. 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: **217.384.2440**

Email: **Planning@urbanail.gov**

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://www.urbanail.gov/executive-department/page/urbana-public-television>**.

LIST OF COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED
Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan 2025

Clarke, Caitlin	Email sent Friday, February 28, 2025 @ 6:17 pm
Elliot, Jason	Email sent Thursday, March 6, 2025 @ 10:08 am
Lee-Calfas, Bridget	Email sent Friday, February 28, 2025 @ 9:55 am
McEvoy, Sarah & Schitoglu, Huseyin	Email sent Tuesday, March 4, 2025 @ 4:09 pm
McGuire, Mary Pat	Email sent Thursday, March 6, 2025 @ 9:22 am
Mead, Betsy & Stelzer, Tim	Email sent Thursday, March 6, 2025 @ 4:52 pm
Neider, Linda	Email sent Friday, February 28, 2025 @ 6:04 pm
Plewa, Michael & Elizabeth	Email sent Thursday, March 6, 2025 @ 3:04 pm
Rothschild, Ron	Email sent Friday, February 28, 2025 @ 11:17 am
Sherman, Leslie	Email sent Monday, March 3, 2025 @ 9:56 am
Silver, Susan	Email sent Friday, February 28, 2025 @ 11:39 am
Steinberg, Lois	Email sent March 4, 2025 @ 8:59 pm
Sturgis, Nisi	Email sent Saturday, March 1, 2025 @ 12:20 pm

From: [Teri Andel](#)
To: [Teri Andel](#)
Subject: FW: REVIEW: PUBLIC INPUT: RE: Plan Commission Input Fwd: [WUNA-Main] Comprehensive Plan 2025 Threatens West Urbana
Date: Friday, March 7, 2025 10:04:07 AM

From: Caitlin Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 28, 2025 6:17 PM
To: Planning <Planning@Urbanall.gov>
Subject: Plan Commission Input Fwd: [WUNA-Main] Comprehensive Plan 2025 Threatens West Urbana

***** Email From An External Source *****

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Hello Council Members,

I hope you are well. I am writing regarding the Comprehensive Plan 2025 as it relates to housing density near Lincoln Avenue. Below, you'll see a thread that has numerous community concerns. I share these concerns, particularly those shared by Paul Debevec and Esther Patt.

While I understand that the city is seeking ways to improve affordable housing, the areas described are more clearly aimed at development for students at the university. We have ample evidence that there is not actually a shortage of housing for students but that instead many units remained empty this year. The university housing shortage was related to first year undergraduate student needs, who are required to be on campus anyway.

My concerns are that the 2025 Plan will increase business for developers who are truly aiming to create luxury priced apartments and duplexes rather than the affordable housing that our community members need. I don't know how else to stop that trend beyond continuing to enforce R1 zoning.

I wanted to note that I have personally been surrounded by mostly rental properties near Race & Nevada and find that things are okay (outside of speeding on Race). So, the density issue is one that I wish was possible to separate from the luxury pricing of new units in town. I have multiple rental units across from me, not just rental houses, and I believe some section 8 housing. It seems to be okay because the pricing of those units are kept relatively affordable. Although some neighbors are students, many are longterm community members or are at least graduate students.

My other primary concern with increase density and/or luxury pricier units is the issue of safety near Leal school. The more UIUC students we add to the WUNA area, the more unsafe driving issues we have. People want to be able to safely walk to and from school, downtown Urbana, and to work on campus. If it is impossible to change the 2025 plan, then we need to at least consider how to ensure pedestrian safety when adding that many more units.

Perhaps some of the WUNA comments below are unfounded. It is difficult for me to assess. But if what I'm reading is accurate, I have significant concerns for our community as mentioned above.

Thanks for your time,

Caitlin Clarke

Sent from Gmail Mobile

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Esther Patt** [REDACTED]
Date: Fri, Feb 28, 2025 at 2:16 PM
Subject: Re: [WUNA-Main] Comprehensive Plan 2025 Threatens West Urbana
To: Ben Zigterman [REDACTED], Leslie Sherman

CC: Erik Sacks [REDACTED], Debevec, Paul T

[REDACTED], [wuna-main](#) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I don't know if they are or will be proposing a change in height restrictions for multi-family housing on Busey.

However, even if they don't, I feel strongly that lining the west side of Busey Avenue with 3-story, 12-unit buildings would be undesirable — both for the people living in the single family homes on the west side of Busey and all of the people living in single family homes on the east side of the street.

Please note that the majority of properties on the west side of Busey from Oregon south to Florida are single family homes. There are only 2 or 3 rooming houses and one or two duplexes.

Twenty years ago, for the 2005 Comprehensive Plan Update, members of the committee preparing the plan wanted to designate all of the Lincon-Busey corridor as R-5, high-density multi-family but WUNA members persuaded the city council to reject the idea.

Just a few years earlier, when the Southridge Subdivision was platted just south of Deerfield Trails, even though all the new construction would be single family homes, the Deerfield Trails homeowner's group demanded and got a buffer between their

single-family subdivision and the new single-family subdivision. Their concern was that homes in Southridge were going to sell for about 2/3 the cost of the homes in Deerfield Trails and Southridge would be zoned R-3, so duplexes could result. To satisfy that neighborhood group, a fence and a multi-purpose path were installed to buffer Deerfield Trails from Southridge.

By comparison, it is not unreasonable for people in our neighborhood to object to expansion of R-5 uses right next door to and across the street from single family homes.

Esther Patt

From: [wuna-](#) [REDACTED] on behalf of Ben Zigterman [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 28, 2025 11:16 AM
To: Leslie Sherman [REDACTED]
Cc: Erik Sacks [REDACTED]; Debevec, Paul T [REDACTED]; [wuna-main](#) [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: [WUNA-Main] Comprehensive Plan 2025 Threatens West Urbana

Does the plan seek to change height restrictions for residential zoning?

> On Feb 28, 2025, at 9:39 AM, Leslie Sherman [REDACTED] wrote:
>
> One of my concerns with allowing the Busey Corridor to be filled with high rises as we see in campus town is that the neighborhood infrastructure like the sewage system cannot handle it.
>
> So very concerning,
> Leslie
>
> On Fri, Feb 28, 2025 at 7:47 AM Erik Sacks [REDACTED] wrote:
> Thanks, Paul.
>
> This plan is a predictable disaster that would only benefit developers at the expense of homeowners.
>
> We must make sure that City Council clearly hears our opposition to this plan.
>
> Erik Sacks
>
> Sent from my iPhone
>
>> On Feb 28, 2025, at 7:35 AM, Debevec, Paul T [REDACTED] wrote:
>>
>> Dear Neighbors:
>> Development of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan -- "Think Urbana" -- is nearly

done. There will be a few more Plan Commission study sessions, and a public session before it goes to the City Council for review and potential approval in April. As it stands now:

>> “Think Urbana” will allow ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, quadraplexes, and small apartments in West Urbana. Do you want that? If not, contact the Plan Commission.

>> “Think Urbana” will eliminate R1 zoning [which permits single-family housing only, and no duplexes from Michigan Avenue to Florida Avenue]. Do you want that? If not, contact the Plan Commission.

>> “Think Urbana” will allow triplexes, quadraplexes, small apartments, middle-sized apartments, townhouse or large apartments along the Busey Corridor – the highest density possible within the City. Do you want that? If not, contact the Plan Commission.

>> PlanCommission@urbanail.gov

>> Subject: Imagine Urbana: Comprehensive Plan 2025

>> Subject [if you want your statement read into the record]:

>> Plan Commission: Public Input: To be read into the record: March 6, 2025: regarding: Imagine Urbana Draft

>> The proposed 2025 Comprehensive Plan – does claim that one of its objectives is to: “Capitalize on the strengths and assets of individual neighborhoods.” Yet, each of the items listed above will be permitted under the new Comp Plan and will, indeed, threaten the stability of our historic neighborhood.

>> Now is the time to let the Plan Commission know that:

>>

>> • Infill development in West Urbana will not bring ‘affordable’ housing without serious local investment. It will not guarantee housing for young professionals or seniors. Experience has shown that all multi-family housing in West Urbana, even condominiums, are high rent and designed for undergraduate students. No new rental housing this close to campus will be affordable.

>>

>> • Cramming more high-density housing stock in West Urbana will completely erode the stability of an APA award-winning historic and walkable neighborhood. It will eliminate currently affordable single-family housing. We do not want West Urbana to resemble the near-campus neighborhoods of Champaign.

>>

>> • Any new development, especially within the Busey Corridor, should limit the number of parcels that can be aggregated to retain the strengths and assets of a historic neighborhood.

>>

>> • Two-thirds of non-University housing units in Urbana are rental and the vacancy rate is over 10% but yet this Comp Plan proposes more rental housing in West Urbana. We do not need more.

>> We request that the housing types that Imagine Urbana proposes be greatly reduced to reflect current zoning in West Urbana. Any exceptions must require public input, as well as review by the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Plan Commission and City Council.

>> Supporting documentation and quotes from Imagine Urbana

>> “Promote Incremental Development: “Incremental development contributes to community growth and sustainability by allowing for gradual, adaptive improvements that meet the needs and preferences of residents. Currently, City regulations often make it easier, or even a requirement, to develop land in ways that run counter to

building a strong community. For example, infill and redevelopment are more complicated than building on undeveloped land on the City's perimeter. The City should work to make incremental development easier."

>> ADU's, triplexes, quadplexes and small apartments would be "Appropriate in some cases." – with no elaboration about the procedural process to determine such appropriateness. [Search for Place/Building Type Matrix in Think Urbana, under <https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/urbana-il/doc-viewer.aspx?secid=110>]

>> Busey Corridor is now designated as "City Center" zoning which would qualify it for triplexes, quadriplexes, small apartments, mid-sized apartments, townhouses and large apartment complexes. [Search for Place/Building Type Matrix in Think Urbana, under <https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/urbana-il/doc-viewer.aspx?secid=110>] Further note that the Comp Plan states: City Centers are the highest-density places in Urbana, with a mix of shops, restaurants, businesses, offices, housing, and institutional uses. Buildings are multi-story and front directly onto sidewalks.

>>

>> Regards, Paul Debevec

>>

>> --

>> The opinions expressed on this moderated list do not necessarily reflect those of the WUNA Steering Committee. To post to this group, send email to wuna-main@westurbana.org

>> To read the WUNA-Main Policies and Procedures, visit <https://westurbana.org/wuna-main-listserv/> or navigate elsewhere on our website to learn about WUNA, how to join, and for resources about the neighborhood and city.

>> Questions about WUNA's Google Groups can be sent to joinwuna@googlegroups.com

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>> You received this message because you are subscribed to the Google Groups "WUNA-Main" group.

>> To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to joinwuna@googlegroups.com

>> To view this discussion visit <https://westurbana.org/wuna-main-listserv/>

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> To read the WUNA-Main Policies and Procedures, visit <https://westurbana.org/wuna-main-listserv/> or navigate elsewhere on our website to learn about WUNA, how to join, and for resources about the neighborhood and city.

> Questions about WUNA's Google Groups can be sent to joinwuna@googlegroups.com

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Under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), any written communication to or from City of Urbana employees, officials or board and commission members regarding City of Urbana business is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.

From: [Jason Elliot](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#); [Planning](#); [Teri Andel](#)
Cc: [WUNA-Main](#)
Subject: regarding: Imagine Urbana: Public Input: To be read into the record
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025 10:08:20 AM

***** Email From An External Source *****

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

I am deeply concerned about the zoning changes in the West Urbana neighborhoods that are proposed in the Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan. The proposed zoning changes, which allow for more multi-family homes and higher-density housing in West Urbana, would undermine the character of Urbana's historic neighborhoods.

I commend the city for its vision and aim of moving Urbana forward economically and culturally. However, the Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan misses the mark and spells disaster for our city.

I acknowledge that Urbana needs to adapt to the ongoing changes of our community, which includes the growth of the University. Toward this, I agree that the Lincoln corridor needs a makeover, and I support some of the changes to Lincoln itself that would focus on pedestrian and bicycle safety. I also do not dispute that this corridor might serve Urbana best when viewed as a "city center," but this transformation must be done carefully with respect to Urbana's historic neighborhoods near that corridor.

Furthermore, I understand that there are benefits to multi-family dwellings. They allow the city to increase its tax revenue and efficiently provide space for growth of its population. I personally have enjoyed living in high-density areas and actually preferred them at certain times in my life. However, I always appreciated nearby neighborhoods that were maintained as single-family occupied homes, especially those with historic charm. These neighborhoods add to the livability of a city, even for those not living in them.

And indeed, livability is crucial. Urbana already has a high vacancy rate. Additional housing does no good without attracting people to our city, and certainly does no good if the result is a less attractive city.

There are better places to add multi-family homes to our city than within our historic neighborhoods and there are additional prospects for increasing revenue that fit with good development. Downtown there are countless acres devoted to parking lots that remain empty most of the time and there are abandoned and minimally-used buildings. Meanwhile, Urbana has natural resources in and near downtown that could be capitalized on, such as our two creeks, Crystal Lake, and historic Leal Park. Urbana has a rich history (predating both Champaign and the University) that is being all but erased with questionable choices in development. Instead, this history should be highlighted along with our natural resources to promote a more vibrant downtown and a more livable city.

Improving our downtown area while protecting our historic neighborhoods would make Urbana more attractive to renters, homeowners, and businesses. Redesigned parking, better access to our parks and creeks, well-placed high-density housing and more inviting public spaces would highlight Urbana's resources, including our historic neighborhoods, and our city would thrive economically.

The Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan, including rezoning our historic neighborhoods like West Urbana, ignores the culture and the resources of Urbana that make Urbana unique. This plan is not based in reality and is therefore bad for the city.

Respectfully,
Jason Elliot



From: [Lee-Calfas, Bridget](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#)
Subject: PLAN COMMISSION INPUT - Lee-Calfas - Comprehensive Plan 2025
Date: Friday, February 28, 2025 9:55:06 AM

*** Email From An External Source ***

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Hello:

I'm concerned about the Think Urbana plans to allow ADUs, duplexes, quads, etc in WUNA and the Busey Corridor and eliminate R1 zoning. I don't think this actually helps with the need for low income housing, it just gives college kids fancier places to live, which we already have plenty of in CU. It will also make housing more dense which will further complicate parking, road clearing, bike and pedestrian traffic and the pressure on our sewage system. I think this plan only benefits developers and not our community and certainly not those who most need support. I encourage the plan commission to "rethink" Think Urbana.

Best,
Bridget Lee-Calfas, WUNA Resident

From: [Sarah McEvoy](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#)
Subject: Imagine Urbana: Comprehensive Plan 2025
Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 4:09:31 PM

*** Email From An External Source ***

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Dear Plan Commission,

I would like our statement to be read into the record on March 6, 2025.

The proposed 2025 Comprehensive Plan claims that one of its objectives is to: “Capitalize on the strengths and assets of individual neighborhoods.” Yet, each of the proposed changes permitted under the new Comprehensive Plan will actually threaten the stability of our historic neighborhood.

“Think Urbana” will allow ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, quadraplexes, and small apartments in West Urbana.

“Think Urbana” will eliminate R1 zoning [which permits single-family housing only, and no duplexes from Michigan Avenue to Florida Avenue.

“Think Urbana” will allow triplexes, quadraplexes, small apartments, middle-sized apartments, townhouse or large apartments along the Busey Corridor – the highest density possible within the City.

Please know that:

Infill development in West Urbana will not bring ‘affordable’ housing without serious local investment. It will not guarantee housing for young professionals or seniors. Experience has shown that all multi-family housing in West Urbana, even condominiums, are high rent and designed for undergraduate students. No new rental housing this close to campus will be affordable.

Cramming more high-density housing stock in West Urbana will completely erode the stability of an APA award-winning historic and walkable neighborhood. It will eliminate currently affordable single-family housing. We do not want West Urbana to resemble the near-campus neighborhoods of Champaign.

Any new development, especially within the Busey Corridor, should limit the number of parcels that can be aggregated to retain the strengths and assets of a historic neighborhood.

Two-thirds of non-University housing units in Urbana are rental and the vacancy rate is over 10%, but yet this Comprehensive Plan proposes more rental housing in West Urbana. We do not need more.

We request that the housing types that Imagine Urbana proposes be greatly reduced to reflect current zoning in West Urbana. Any exceptions must require public input, as well as review by the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Plan Commission and City Council.

Thank you,
Sarah McEvoy and Huseyin Schitoglu



From: [Mary Pat McGuire](#)
To: [Teri Andel](#); [Planning](#); [Plan Commission](#); [Maryalice Wu](#)
Subject: PLAN COMMISSION - Public Input for March 6, 2025 study session
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025 9:22:24 AM
Attachments: [DraftCompPlan-Comment-Mar6-2025.pdf](#)

***** Email From An External Source *****

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

March 6, 2025

Re: Draft Comprehensive Plan, Study Sessions (PDF attached to email)

Dear Urbana Plan Commission Members Dustin Allred (Chair), Will Andresen, Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Debarah McFarland, Bill Rose, Karen Simms, Chenxi Yu,

I write to you as a homeowner living in West Urbana and the Lincoln-Busey Corridor. My neighbors are a mix of homeowners and renters, with some single family homes, some multi-family homes, and some larger multi-unit buildings. We form the edge of the neighborhood facing the university and we experience a healthy mix of community and campus adjacent activity.

Designating the east side of Lincoln Avenue as a “City Center” is a big departure in scale and character for this neighborhood. City Centers in the comp plan are described as “the highest-density places in Urbana” and City Center land-use in the comp plan is described as “*Commercial, serving the needs of neighborhood residents, surrounding neighborhoods, and the City at large. High-density residential. Entertainment and nightlife. Research and development, small-scale manufacturing, office uses, and some institutional uses. Different uses are often mixed in the same building.*” Calling a half-block strip of Lincoln-Busey a City Center seems very unreasonable and I hope that you will reconsider this designation in the comp plan as part of your study.

The comp plan says that **incremental infill** is a key strategy throughout the plan. Going from R2 zoning to “highest-density” City Center is not incremental. A City Center designation along the east side of Lincoln will build a wall along Lincoln Avenue. We only need to look at the way Champaign has built up University Avenue as an extension of their downtown. This wall turns its back on the neighborhood to the north and creates an unfriendly pedestrian environment along University. We do not want University Avenue on our Lincoln Avenue. We embrace incremental infill, not a wall of the “highest-density” development in Urbana.

There are three designations for “neighborhood” place types in the comp plan - Neighborhood I, Neighborhood II, and Neighborhood Center. **If Urbana wants to incentivize infill with some mixed use along Lincoln Avenue that still fits the neighborhood, then a “Place Type” designation such as Neighborhood Center should be applied to the neighborhood here, not City Center.** We have a City

Center - it is in the center of our city and highest-density development should be concentrated there in unused parking lots for example, not eating up our community.

Neighbors from across the community are submitting letters to share ideas for how to make development truly incremental and positive for both Urbana and the community. I urge you to pay attention to and study these ideas in your study sessions. These include requests like limiting parcel aggregation which is reasonable and good planning. Tree preservation and studying the infrastructure implications are also reasonable and good planning. Ensuring that Lincoln Avenue is reconstructed as a green and complete street to address safety for everyone is also vital for a more positive, healthy, place-based approach to this area of Urbana.

Thank you for studying this part of the plan and providing a more reasonable approach here.

Sincerely,
Mary McGuire, PLA, ASLA

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Mary Pat McGuire.

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Mary Pat McGuire, PLA, ASLA

From: [Becky Mead](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#); [Planning](#); [Teri Andel](#)
Cc: [Stelzer Timothy J](#)
Subject: Planning Commission: Public Input "Imagine Urbana"
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025 4:52:57 PM

***** Email From An External Source *****

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March 6, 2025

To the Members of the Urbana Plan Commission:

The West Urbana neighborhood is a wonderful walkable, livable neighborhood with historic structures and a vibrant community. It is a desirable neighborhood for academics, students, families, and retirees because of its proximity to the university and to public transportation as well as to parks, schools, the library and downtown Urbana. For decades, there has been pressure from developers to increase the density of the area. Every such change has resulted in large scale apartment buildings catering to affluent university students. The high density of these apartment buildings is not appropriate for our unique neighborhood and notably there is already an over abundance of such buildings not filled to capacity along the Lincoln corridor. These short-sighted proposals allow developers free rein to dominate, over shadow and degrade the quality of our space. Instead the city should value our neighborhood's charm and nature and to preserve it as an asset.

Thank you for your consideration.

Becky Mead and Tim Stelzer

From: [Linda Neider](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#)
Subject: Imagine Urbana: Comprehensive Plan 2025
Date: Friday, February 28, 2025 6:04:50 PM

***** Email From An External Source *****

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

As a resident of West Urbana, I am not in favor of eliminating the R1 zoning for our neighborhood.

Linda Neider

From: [Plewa, Michael Jacob](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#); [Planning](#); [Teri Andel](#)
Cc: [wuna-mair](#) [REDACTED]
Subject: Plan Commission: Public Input: To be read into the record: March 6, 2025: regarding: Imagine Urbana Draft
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025 3:04:32 PM

***** Email From An External Source *****

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Regarding: Imagine Urbana: Public Input: To be read into the record

To be read into the record.

We are discouraged about the zoning changes in the West Urbana neighborhoods that are proposed in the Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan. It appears that the Plan Commission and the Urbana City staff planners wish to increase the density within the historic West Urbana neighborhood for the primary benefit of predatory developers. We have lived in Urbana since the mid-1970s as renters and as homeowners. We bought a distressed property on West Iowa Street in 1978 and over the decades improved our residence into a comfortable and energy efficient home. When we began our careers as scientists/professor we chose our neighborhood for its proximity to our laboratory at the University of Illinois and because it has R-2 residential zoning. When purchasing a home there is at least an implicit contract that through the zoning ordinance the city will protect the investment of owner-occupied residents. The proposed zoning changes, which allow for more multi-family homes and higher-density housing in West Urbana, would undermine the character of Urbana's historic neighborhoods.

Please reflect that we the people, through our work and investment in our city, have made our neighborhood unique. The West-Urbana neighborhood was awarded by the American Planning Association as one of 10 Great Neighborhoods in America. The citation, in part, reads the following.

“Located between two dynamic areas — the University of Illinois and downtown Urbana — West Urbana has maintained its unique neighborhood identity for more than a century, refusing to succumb to the pressures of high-density development or issues surrounding absentee landlords. Many historic properties remain today, the result of an active citizenry and sustained planning efforts. The American Planning Association has selected West Urbana as one of 10 Great Neighborhoods in America for 2007 in recognition of the neighborhood's sustainable design; commuters who walk, bike, or ride transit at higher-than-average rates; inviting neighborhood spaces; and community focus on enhancing quality of life. ... Making a great neighborhood isn't magic but, as West Urbana shows, it takes a community where residents are involved with their neighborhood and plan for its future.”

Throughout these many years our city staff and planners seem to have a determined effort to diminish the quality of our neighborhood that was so well described by the American Planning Association. Over the years, and after attending countless meetings, our view is that the principal focus of our city planners is to encourage predatory developers and absentee landlords. Perhaps our current planning staff and the Plan Commission should carefully consider the citation by the American Planning Association. Planners do not make a neighborhood great; the residents and homeowners do.

The Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan, including rezoning our historic neighborhoods like West Urbana, ignores the culture and the resources of Urbana. Do no harm; this plan is bad for the city.

Sincerely,

Michael Plewa

Elizabeth Wagner Plewa

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Ron Rothschild](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#)
Subject: PLAN COMMISSION INPUT - Rothschild - Comprehensive Plan 2025
Date: Friday, February 28, 2025 11:17:54 AM

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Please preserve our historic neighborhood which would be lost if we allowed big building structures. We already have 10% vacancy rates which would only increase. Please preserve this unique and valuable neighborhood as is.

Thank you,

Ronald Rothschild



From: [Leslie Sherman](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#)
Cc: [WUNA-Main](#)
Subject: Plan Commission: Public Input: To be read into record: March 6,2025: regarding Imagine Urbana Draft
Date: Monday, March 3, 2025 9:56:43 AM

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Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed 2025 Comprehensive Plan and its potential impact on our historic neighborhood in West Urbana. While the plan claims to “capitalize on the strengths and assets of individual neighborhoods,” I believe that the proposed changes will threaten the stability and character of the West Urbana neighborhood.

Firstly, the current infrastructure, including sewers and drainage systems, does not support the same scale of development as a city center or downtown area. The proposed infill development in West Urbana will not bring affordable housing without significant local investment. Experience has shown that multi-family housing in our area, even condominiums, are high rent and primarily designed for undergraduate students. Consequently, no new rental housing this close to campus will be affordable for young professionals or seniors.

Furthermore, increasing high-density housing stock in West Urbana will erode the stability of our American Planning Association award-winning historic and walkable neighborhood. It will eliminate currently affordable single-family housing and transform our community to resemble the near-campus neighborhoods of Champaign, where most single-family homes have been replaced by apartment buildings and there are no longer owner-occupied homes. This is not the future we want for West Urbana.

Any new development, especially within the Busey Corridor, should limit the height of structures and the number of parcels that can be aggregated to retain the strengths and assets of our historic neighborhood. Additionally, with two-thirds of non-University housing units in Urbana being rental and a vacancy rate over 10%, there is no need for more rental housing in West Urbana as proposed by the Comprehensive Plan.

I respectfully request that the housing types proposed by Imagine Urbana be greatly reduced to reflect current zoning in West Urbana. Also that any exceptions should require public input and thorough review by the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Plan Commission, and the City Council.

Thank you for considering my concerns. I hope the Planning Commission will take these points into account to preserve the unique character and stability of our historic neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Leslie Sherman

From: [Susan Silver](#)
To: [Teri Andel](#)
Subject: PLAN COMMISSION INPUT - Silver - Comprehensive Plan 2025
Date: Friday, February 28, 2025 11:39:45 AM

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Hi Teri - here is my input and the screen shots we discussed, thanks for your help -

Hello - I am writing to advise the commission that I do not support the proposed changes in zoning for West Urbana neighborhoods. This plan only benefits land developers at the expense of a wonderful neighborhood where I have lived for over 60 years. New develop will not provide affordable housing in Urbana as is evident by the rents charged currently. The rents for the proposed duplexes near Carle were completely unaffordable for a young couple or family. It appears that the Plan Commission is really primarily interested in increasing the tax base not preserving community. I understand that Urbana needs tax revenue but it should not be at the expense of a long established neighborhood.

Thank you,
Susan Silver
Long term West Urbana Resident

From: [Lois Steinberg](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#); [WUNA-Main](#)
Subject: Imagine Urbana
Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 8:59:47 PM

***** Email From An External Source *****

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Dear Planning Commission,

First, I imagine Urbana differently than the proposed draft for the historic neighborhood of West Urbana. I imagine blocking so-called development that erodes the neighborhood. WUNA gets thrown under the bus by city officials wanting predatory developers (PDs) to infiltrate our neighborhood with low quality student housing and even milk them as they do houses for everything it is worth until the buildings are as deteriorated as the houses were before. If the blocks up to Busey are eroded further, the next block will also go. It has been happening for decades when housing used to go up to campus.

I imagine houses being rehabbed and rehomed to owner occupiers or rehabbed substantially so that students will want to live in them again. The reason "students do not want to live in group houses anymore," as a recent mayoral candidate stated ignorantly, is that the PDs' houses are left to completely run down. I heard a PD state that he inherited the house in a bad state. That is no excuse for not fixing it up. A good example are the two houses on the south corner of Birch and Green that were rehabbed (not by a predatory developer) and students are living in them again.

Furthermore, to allow commercial development on LIncoln to Busey or Green Street from LIncoln to Race is not current with the times. The growing e-commerce/online shopping and decreasing in-person sales has been evident for years now. Better to rehab what is there for people to live in. It would be more prudent to focus on infill in Downtown Urbana for living, shopping, and entertainment.

Second, I am curious to know what the rental registration program has done to help the problem of PDs (all over Urbana) let their houses run down or abandon them.

Last, I cannot believe that we have a Gold Level Bike Friendly City. It continues to be unsafe to ride a bike when there are only painted lanes without curbs. Also, drivers have to learn how to make right hand turns when there is a bike lane. They do not and this often results in misses and near misses of cars and bikes. This latter point is a state issue for all motorists to respect and know the rules of the road for bikes as well as pedestrians.

With Respect,

Lois Steinberg

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Nisi Sturgis](#)
To: [Plan Commission](#)
Subject: Plan Commission: Public Input: To be read into the record: March 6, 2025: regarding: Imagine Urbana Draft
Date: Saturday, March 1, 2025 12:20:26 PM

***** Email From An External Source *****

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Hello,

Please listen to members of this community. We request that the housing types that Imagine Urbana proposes be greatly reduced to reflect current zoning in West Urbana. See below.

Sincerely,

A concerned Urbana resident

The proposed 2025 Comprehensive Plan – does claim that one of its objectives is to: “Capitalize on the strengths and assets of individual neighborhoods.” Yet, each of the items listed above will be permitted under the new Comp Plan and will, indeed, threaten the stability of our historic neighborhood.

Now is the time to let the Plan Commission know that:

- Infill development in West Urbana will not bring ‘affordable’ housing without serious local investment. It will not guarantee housing for young professionals or seniors. Experience has shown that all multi-family housing in West Urbana, even condominiums, are high rent and designed for undergraduate students. No new rental housing this close to campus will be affordable.
- Cramming more high-density housing stock in West Urbana will completely erode the stability of an APA award-winning historic and walkable neighborhood. It will eliminate currently affordable single-family housing. We do not want West Urbana to resemble the near-campus neighborhoods of Champaign.
- Any new development, especially within the Busey Corridor, should limit the number of parcels that can be aggregated to retain the strengths and assets of a historic neighborhood.

- Two-thirds of non-University housing units in Urbana are rental and the vacancy rate is over 10% but yet this Comp Plan proposes more rental housing in West Urbana. We do not need more.

Any exceptions must require public input, as well as review by the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Plan Commission and City Council.



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: The Urbana Plan Commission
FROM: Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner and Zoning Administrator
DATE: March 6, 2025
SUBJECT: **Plan Case 2500-T-25:** A request by the Urbana Zoning Administrator to amend regulations in Article VI of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance allowing porches and porch stairs to encroach into a required yard.

Introduction

The Zoning Administrator proposes a text amendment to allow stairs that are used to access buildings and outdoor living areas to encroach into required yards up to six inches from a property line. The text amendment would also amend another paragraph to make it easier to understand.

The Plan Commission is asked to review the proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendment and make a recommendation for City Council to adopt or deny the proposed changes. Staff recommends that the Plan Commission recommend approval of the proposed changes as presented.

Background and Discussion

Porch stairs are currently allowed to encroach up to five feet into a required yard, while porches are allowed to encroach five feet into a required yard, regardless of the average setback. In practice, this means that a porch can encroach further into a required front yard than stairs coming off of the porch. This appears to be an oversight in the Zoning Ordinance that was inadvertently created by a previous text amendment that sought to clarify how far porches could encroach into required yards, but did not address porch stairs.

This apparent oversight was brought to light during a recent case where an applicant requested a major variance to allow new front steps that would encroach into a required yard. While City Council and staff believed that the front steps would be more in character with the neighborhood and would be more appealing than an alternative that would comply with the Zoning Ordinance, Council ultimately denied the variance request because there was no special circumstance necessitating the variance. In other words, there was no compelling reason that the applicant could not comply with the Zoning Ordinance, even though all parties felt that complying with the ordinance would lead to a less desirable outcome than what the applicant had proposed. Given this, Council encouraged staff to draft a text amendment to address the situation.

Proposed Changes

The proposed changes would amend one paragraph to allow stairs to encroach into required yards with no caveats, and would amend one paragraph to make it easier to read and understand, without making any substantive changes to it.

Paragraph VI-5.B.3

This paragraph would be amended to allow stairways, landings, etc. to encroach into required yards, as follows:

~~Access to buildings and outdoor living areas when consisting of a~~Uncovered stairways, stairway landings, and stoops which are used to access buildings and outdoor living areas, and which are at or below the plane of the ground floor of a building, ~~constructed prior to November 6, 1950,~~ may encroach ~~up to five feet~~ into a required yard, but not within six inches of a property line.

(~~Strikethrough~~ = removed text ; Underline = added text)

Discussion: It's unclear what harm would be caused by allowing stairs and landings in required yards. Countless buildings in our most cherished neighborhoods have this characteristic. If anything, our regulations should encourage, rather than deny, the option to replicate characteristics of our most cherished neighborhoods. Moreover, it seems like an oversight to allow porches and decks to encroach into required yards up to five feet, but not to allow stairs that access them to also encroach into required yards to provide access to those same porches and decks.

The proposed changes would simplify the text without causing any foreseeable harm: it would simply allow stairs in required yards, with no caveats other than being at least six inches from a property line.

While the intent of limiting this paragraph to buildings constructed before 1950 is to only allow these provisions in older neighborhoods, it's unclear what harm would arise if this were allowed in newer neighborhoods. More importantly, since this provision is limited to buildings constructed before 1950, and not to buildings on lots platted before 1950, these provisions make it harder to build a new building in an older neighborhood that matches the character of surrounding buildings. It could also make it harder to rebuild on older, narrower lots, since it does not allow stairs in side yards. Staff therefore propose eliminating the pre-1950 building requirement.

Paragraph VI-5.B.5

This paragraph would be amended for clarity as follows:

Outdoor living areas ~~raised nine or more inches above existing grade,~~ such as porches, terraces, and decks, which are raised nine or more inches above existing grade and are open to the elements, may encroach up to five feet into a minimum required yard ~~as specified in Table VI-3,~~ regardless of average setback, but not within five feet of a property line. ~~For the purposes of this provision, the definition of "open"~~Open to the elements" shall include ~~and allow any roof, awning, or pergola covering a raised outdoor living area,~~ covered outdoor living area enclosed with mesh screening and screen frames, but which ~~are~~is not glassed in or otherwise walled or enclosed above a height of 30 inches above the floor of the raised outdoor living area and/or any balustrade required for guardrail safety.

~~When replacing or upgrading an existing porch and/or porch stairs in~~ In an R-1, R-2, R-3, or MOR zoning district, replacement porches ~~and/or~~ porch stairs may be constructed in the location of the existing porch ~~and/or~~ porch stairs, but no closer than six inches from any property line, ~~measured from the closest part of the structure.~~ The Replacement porch stairs may extend further ~~encroach~~ by the minimum amount required to bring the rise/run of the stairs up to current Building Code standards.

Discussion: These changes are not substantive, but would make this section easier to read and understand.

Comprehensive Plan

The proposed text amendment would help meet the following goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Goal 1.0 Preserve and enhance the character of Urbana’s established residential neighborhoods.
- Goal 2.0 New development in an established neighborhood will be compatible with the overall urban design and fabric of that neighborhood.
- Obj. 2.1 Ensure that the site design for new development in established neighborhoods is compatible with the built fabric of that neighborhood.
- Goal 18.0 Promote infill development.

The text amendment would allow development that is more in line with established residential neighborhoods, for rehabilitating existing buildings and for new buildings (i.e. infill development).

Summary of Findings

1. The proposed amendment would modify Article VI – Development Regulations, by changing paragraph VI-5.B.3 to allow stairs that are used to access buildings and outdoor living areas to encroach into required yards up to six inches from a property line.
2. The proposed amendment would modify Article VI – Development Regulations, by altering paragraph VI-5.B.5 to make it easier to read.
3. The proposed amendment would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan to preserve and enhance the character of established residential neighborhoods, preserve the characteristics that make Urbana unique, and ensure that new land uses are compatible with and enhance the existing community.
4. The proposed amendment conforms to the notification and other requirements for Zoning Ordinances as required by the State Zoning Act (65 ILCS 5/11-13-14).

Options

The Plan Commission has the following options in Plan Case 2500-T-25:

1. Forward the case to City Council with a recommendation to approve the text amendment as presented herein; or
2. Forward the case to City Council with a recommendation to approve the text amendment as modified by specific suggested changes; or
3. Forward the case to City Council with a recommendation of denial of the text amendment.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Plan Commission recommend **approval** of the proposed text amendment to City Council.