



City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Council Chambers
Wednesday, October 23, 2013
3:00 p.m.

The meeting was brought to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair), Shey and Olson. Staff members present: Joe O'Hern, Interim Community Development Director; Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager; Caleb Mason, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist; Vern Zakostelecky, Development Services Planner; Todd Fagan, City Arborist; Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; and Alicia Abernathy, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Vernon stated the Development Committee meets monthly and the purpose of the committee is to review development and economic issues that involve the community. Items are brought forward to the agenda from City staff, Council members and sometimes citizens.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to approve the minutes from September 25, 2013. Council member Shey made a motion to approve the minutes from September 25, 2013. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Informational Items and Updates

Joe O'Hern, Interim Community Development Director, stated the regularly scheduled meeting date for November would be November 27th, which is the day before Thanksgiving. Staff is asking if it would be better to move the meeting up a week to November 20th. Council member Vernon requested staff tentatively plan on meeting on November 20th. Mr. O'Hern stated staff will plan for November 20th.

Mr. O'Hern stated there is also an issue with the December meeting as the regularly scheduled meeting is Christmas Day. The meeting can either be moved to December 18th or cancelled. The committee decided to determine the December meeting date at the November 20th meeting.

Council member Olson joined the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Council member Vernon stated two topics need to be brought before the Development Committee including urban revitalization and an update on SAFE CR. Mr. O'Hern stated a SAFE CR update can be provided at the November meeting. SAFE CR had a very successful training on October 21st. Over 400 comment cards were filled out and staff will be working to make changes based on the feedback received.

1. Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District Strategic Plan

Jennifer Pruden, Main Street Executive Director, stated a draft strategic plan was presented to the Development Committee in the spring and the strategic plan is now complete. The district is faced with the challenges that accompany rapid growth including how to guide investment in ways that will complement the area. Due to the challenges, the Main Street District decided to create a strategic plan to help guide development while preserving and enhancing the district's unique charm and architectural assets. The plan incorporates past studies, public feedback, best practices, etc. The Main Street program is an incremental process which has been evidenced over the previous four years with over \$25,000,000 in private reinvestment in the district and 35 new businesses and 64 new jobs within the past year. Ms. Pruden presented a concept map identifying key connector streets stating the plan will enhance the walkability of the streets with streetscaping, bike racks, lighting, cleanliness, signage, etc. Ms. Pruden also identified potential gateway intersections, trails, greenspace, parking, places for proposed infill, etc. Ms. Pruden identified the implementation strategy and ways to promote growth.

Council member Shey asked what the park and ride lot will be used for. Ms. Pruden stated the lot is currently being used for the Federal Courthouse but when they are no longer using it, it will be additional parking for Czech Village and New Bohemia. Council member Olson asked if property owners of the district were involved in the creation of the plan. Ms. Pruden stated property owners were invited to participate and they were accepting of the plan.

Lu Barron, Linn County Board of Supervisors, stated they have come a long way and will be working to become a SSMID District. Council member Vernon stated she is in agreement with the majority of the plan and the City is working to determine how the Sinclair site will be used.

2. Low Income Housing Tax Credit Requests

Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager, stated the City received six new requests for support for Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). In addition, there is a project that had support last year that did not receive funding from the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and the developer is asking the City to renew support of the project. Of the proposals received, two are workforce housing proposals and four are senior housing proposals. If all projects are funded it will create 319 new units. Five projects are requesting City financial participation in order to receive maximum points from IFA for Local Government Contribution. Ms. Mitchell identified the options for Local Government Contribution. Ms. Mitchell explained each proposed project including site location and number of units. Ms. Mitchell stated staff will review financial requests and provide recommendations to the Development Committee in November before proceeding to City Council on December 3rd.

Council member Olson asked if the neighborhoods were involved. Ms. Mitchell stated contact information is provided to the neighborhood associations and staff encourages the developer to complete the outreach. Points are awarded for having the correct zoning on the property therefore some of the outreach will take place through the rezoning process.

Council member Shey asked if the City has a need for all the proposed senior housing. Ms. Mitchell stated the Housing Market Analysis showed the City is in need of 230 to 275 units for seniors from 2013 through 2020. Council member Vernon stated the renderings need to appear close to what the proposed site will look like when asking for City participation.

3. Request for City Property

Caleb Mason, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist, stated the City received a letter of interest from adjacent property owners for two City-owned properties. The first property at 438 4th Avenue SW was offered through the ROOTs project and there was no interest received from developers. The request is to put the property out for Request for Proposals (RFP). The property is located within the Kingston Village Area therefore criteria can be incorporated into the development agreement to satisfy goals of the Kingston Village Area. The second request is for 821 & 825 Shaver Road NE and was submitted by the adjacent property owner for expansion of a restaurant business operation. The property is located along Cedar Lake and a portion is in the 100 year floodplain which puts limitations on the use of the property. Mr. Mason identified recommended criteria to incorporate in the RFP for each of the properties.

Council member Vernon asked if trees or buffering would be incorporated into the project for 438 4th Avenue SW if the space will be used for parking. Mr. Mason stated trees and buffering could be negotiated into the development agreement.

Council member Shey made a motion to take the recommendation to City Council. Council member Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

4. Annexation Request by DK Land Services

Vern Zakostecky, Development Services Planner, stated the Infrastructure Committee reviewed and recommended approval for an annexation request that includes a request for a sanitary sewer lift station to be owned and maintained by the City. The annexation request is for an area north of Blairs Ferry Road and west of Milburn Road in total of 64 acres. Some of area will not have gravity sewer available so a lift station is needed. Mr. Zakostecky stated staff will look into a policy for the City to own and maintain the lift station with the developer setting up a homeowners association that would pay the annual maintenance costs. Mr. Zakostecky presented a concept map of where houses and roadways would be constructed.

Council member Vernon asked why the adjacent subdivision is not included in the annexation. Mr. Zakostecky stated the property owners would probably not voluntarily annex. Council member Vernon asked if they were on septic. Mr. Zakostecky stated that was correct and it has been extended but it has not been extended to the west side of Milburn Road.

Council member Shey made a motion to take the recommendation to City Council. Council member Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

5. Emerald Ash Borer Update

Todd Fagan, City Arborist, stated the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was recently confirmed in Mechanicsville and staff is preparing for when the EAB gets to Cedar Rapids. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) visited Cedar Rapids to check the ash trees. In November there is a possibility for quarantine of eastern Iowa because of the EAB. Treatments are available and they are 95-97% effective but there are drawbacks for large scale treatments which is why the City does not do them but allow homeowners to treat their own trees.

Council member Olson asked what percent of the trees in Cedar Rapids are ash trees. Mr. Fagan stated staff is estimating 20% of the trees are ash trees.

6. Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Work Plan

Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner, stated the goals for 2014 of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) have been defined by the members. Mr. Smith identified the following goals as part of the HPC work plan:

1. Participate in preservation, salvage and documentation of historic structures
2. Increase communication (internally within the City and also with other historic preservation organizations throughout the City)
3. Improve public relations
4. Provide information and educational opportunities for the public
5. Provide education opportunities for HPC members

Amanda McKnight-Grafton, HPC Chair, stated one of the highlights from 2013 was hosting the second annual Preservation Showcase. It was a daylong event consisting of seminars and hands on workshops that dealt with historic tax credits and restoration. The end of the event included an awards ceremony honoring property owners for their preservation efforts. Another highlight from 2013 is the creation of the B Avenue NE Historic District from 15th Street to 21st Street including the Franklin Middle School. HPC also coordinated with Habitat for Humanity ReStore for the salvage of historic materials from over 20 buildings. Other highlights include holding a Section 106 training and working with Kirkwood Community College to create a historic preservation curriculum. The curriculum will be the only one of its kind in Iowa. Ms. McKnight stated a highlight for the HPC in 2014 will be their involvement in the 2014 Preserve Iowa Summit that Cedar Rapids is hosting. Also, a citywide historic survey is underway that will help determine historic properties and will be compiled into a database that is available to everyone.

Council member Olson stated dialogue needs to continue in regards to changes to the ordinance. Ms. McKnight-Grafton stated the HPC is reviewing their processes in order to find a method of streamlining. Council member Vernon stated perhaps there could be a longer review period for older buildings. Council member Vernon suggested the Development Committee and the HPC have a joint meeting to discuss options.

7. City Planning Commission (CPC) Work Plan

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated on January 1, 2013 the new Development Services Department took over land development applications and deals with the City Planning Commission (CPC) on a regular basis. The Development Services team has indicated there have been high numbers of applications this year and the CPC is continuing to work through the applications as they come before them.

Scott Overland, CPC Chair, stated the CPC continues to meet every three weeks and reviews between two and six applications each meeting. The CPC is seeing new projects, especially with the new PUD zoning, that are exceeding the minimum standards set by the City. There has been remarkable progress in the previous years. There have been numerous training opportunities available to CPC members, including the American Planning Association (APA) Conference that was held in Cedar Rapids. The Comprehensive Plan will become a big part of future activity and the CPC will be involved in the update from the 1999 Comprehensive Plan.

Council member Olson stated the CPC is an important commission and it is important to ensure members are present as their vote counts, especially with controversial issues. The training aspect is very important in order to make difficult decisions as a CPC member.

8. Visual Arts Commission (VAC) Work Plan

Jim Kern, VAC Chair, stated the Visual Arts Commission (VAC) added seven new pieces to the City's collection this year. Six of the pieces are located in the new convention center and the seventh piece is located at the City's Amphitheatre. The art collection within the Paramount Theatre was also completed following restoration of paintings and sculptures. In the coming year the main goals of the VAC do not change but the tactics and priorities do change. The VAC plans to bring all pieces within the City's art collection out of storage and into the public view.

9. Kingston Village Overlay District Recommendation

Mr. Gunnerson stated staff is seeking a recommendation to establish a Kingston Village Overlay District with regulations similar to the Czech Village / New Bohemia Overlay District. Staff is also seeking a recommendation to create a Design Review Technical Advisory Committee (DRTAC) for the Kingston Village District. Technical experts such as architects can be shared between the multiple DRTAC's. Staff is also requesting a recommendation on sign review that would allow the committee to review sign permits that establish a new sign, change a sign type or change the size of an existing sign.

Council member Olson made a motion to take the recommendations to City Council. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Council member Vernon suggested technical experts are not shared between multiple DRTACs. There are enough experts in the community that sharing should not be necessary.

10. Parking Changes – Round Three

Mr. Gunnerson stated staff will research parking standards outside of the core area including parking maximums, on street parking and reduction in the requirements. Updates to staff's progress will be provided at upcoming Development Committee meetings.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council member Shey made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council member Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development