



City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, March 27, 2013
3:00 p.m.

The meeting was brought to order at 3:05 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair), Olson and Shey. Staff members present: Christine Butterfield, Community Development Director; LaSheila Yates, Housing Programs Manager; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Rob Davis, Engineering Manager; Alex Sharpe, Community Development Planner; Kevin Ciabatti, Building Services Manager; Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner; Vern Zakostelecky, Development Services Planner; Brad DeBrower, Transit Manager; Doug Wilson, Capital Improvement Project Manager; Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Planner, and Alicia Abernathy, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

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

Christine Butterfield, Community Development Director, stated there was an informational item that needed to be discussed and asked if the agenda could be amended to allow the discussion. Council member Shey made a motion to amend the agenda to include an information item. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to approve the minutes from February 27, 2013. Council member Shey made a motion to approve the minutes from February 27, 2013. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Informational Items and Updates

LaSheila Yates, Housing Programs Manager, stated staff has received notification from HUD over the previous week that there will be a funding cut for the Cedar Rapids Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program for the 2013 federal fiscal year. To address the current shortfall staff has taken measures to mitigate the economic impact including pulling families from the waiting list and limiting family moves to units that are equal or lesser values. HUD provided preliminary information but did not provide a finalized budget. Staff will continue to explore other options to ensure the quality of the program is maintained during this time.

Council member Olson joined the meeting at 3:09 p.m.

1. Parklets

Rob Davis, Engineering Manager, stated because parklets are a new idea for Cedar Rapids, staff secured the services of HR Green to assist in designing the parklets. In order to gather bids staff would like feedback from the Development Committee on details of the parklets.

Jen Winter, HR Green, stated research was done to look into what other communities across the nation are doing. Ms. Winter presented examples of dining area parklets and bench style parklets. If the City decided to go with the dining area parklets, the table and chairs could be provided by the City or by the renter. If the City decided on the bench style, the benches would come with the system provided by the City. Council member Vernon stated she liked the idea of tables and chairs so there could be service from the restaurants. Council member Olson stated it depends how far down 3rd Street the parklets go because not all the blocks have restaurants. It would be beneficial to have both so benches can be used on blocks where there are no restaurants. Council member Vernon asked if the benches could be removable as this would provide more flexibility. Ms. Winter stated removable benches would be an option.

Ms. Winter also provided examples of planter styles for the parklets system. Council member Olson stated the decision of planters depends on who will maintain them but the taller planters serve as a buffer between the parklets and the traffic. Ms. Winter stated the majority of other communities require the renter maintain the planters. Ms. Butterfield stated interest was shown for high visual impacts with low maintenance. Mr. Davis pointed out some of the options contain segmented pieces so if a piece was damaged the entire parklet would not need to be replaced.

Ms. Winter provided examples of simple and sophisticated styles. Council member Olson stated there needs to be some type of wire barrier on the parklets to prevent people from stepping into the street. Council member Vernon asked if the sophisticated versus simple look was in reference to the railings. Ms. Winter stated it addresses the overall look including the planter style, flooring, railing, etc. Ms. Winter pointed out examples of different types of flooring and asked if the City Council would like to allow the individual renters to decide on their appearance or if the City would decide a consistent appearance. Council member Vernon stated the City would decide on a signature look for all parklets. Council member Vernon suggested using black to get the parklets started as there is a lot of black incorporated into the downtown. The parklets should be simple so a statement can be made from the beginning and uniform parklets sends a message.

Mr. Davis stated because this is a public improvement the State Code will be followed for bidding, therefore, the upcoming weeks will be used to hold group meetings. The bids will be due the first week in May and will be brought forward to a City Council meeting in May. The timeline and price for each bid will be included in the presentation to City Council.

Mr. Davis stated commitments from business owners will be brought to the Development Committee in April. Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated a policy is in place for the lease of downtown space for outdoor cafes, which is currently \$10. Staff is working the framework for the policy to create space to enable people to do outdoor cafes. Council member Olson asked if the renters would have the responsibility of purchasing tables, chairs and maintaining the café. Mr. Gunnerson stated this is correct under the City's current policy. Ms. Butterfield stated the policy for parklets is not complete. After further research options will be presented for going with the outdoor café approach or requiring an additional charge. Staff would also like, for the first season of parklets, to have renters provide feedback on the parklet system. Ms. Butterfield stated there is an issue as it relates to alcohol as there is a State

requirement to provide a continuous path from the restaurant to the parklet. Staff is still researching options to address this issue.

Council member Olson stated there is a liability issue that needs to be discussed as someone could crash into one of the parklets. Council member Vernon suggested rope lights are used on the parklets to add to the festivity of the parklets at night and also address safety concerns.

Mr. Gunnerson stated staff will meet with the Economic Alliance and the ACE District and provide an update at the April 30 Development Committee meeting.

Council member Shey stepped out of the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

2. Sign Ordinance Update

Mr. Gunnerson stated the purpose of the update is to inform the Development Committee what staff has been working on, provide feedback from stakeholder meetings and provide a digital sign presentation. The stakeholder meetings consisted of sign company representatives, City Council members, representatives from the Board of Adjustment and representatives from the City Planning Commission.

Mr. Gunnerson went over the following timeline addressing what is complete, in progress and what is anticipated in upcoming months:

Completed:

- The moratorium was enacted February 1, 2013
- Stakeholder Meetings were held March 18 & 25

In progress

- Stakeholder meetings and staff research takes place through April

Anticipated

- April 30 – Staff will present options for final ordinance
- May 16 – Options will be reviewed by the City Planning Commission
- June – City Council Public Hearing will be held
- July 31 – The 180 day moratorium will expire

Mr. Gunnerson provided an update of stakeholder meetings stating the March 18th meeting was an introduction to sign issues. The key outcomes received from the meeting included the desire to see clarity in the code and the desire to see consistency in the outcomes. Another meeting held on March 25th was to discuss billboard options that were presented to the Development Committee in November 2012. Key outcomes received from the meeting included the preference for establishing clear requirements in the zoning code and defining billboards separately from other off-premise signs. Keeping billboards and off-premise signs separate was a concern identified by the development community and sign companies.

Alex Sharpe, Community Development Planner, stated staff collected information from different communities and found there are five basic options. The options include a ban of all digital billboards, an overlay district, having a separation distance, basing on street typology and limiting by the use of the signs. Council member Olson asked if when referring to digital signs it included business signs and billboards. Mr. Sharpe stated it included all digital signs. Mr. Gunnerson stated staff will discuss internally what the best approach is for Cedar Rapids.

Mr. Sharpe provided definitions of digital display signs and luminosity to provide a basic understanding. Mr. Sharpe provided definitions and presented examples of animated, static, flashing and video signs. Mr. Gunnerson stated animated signs have a moving effect while the sign is transitioning. Several communities require the transition of billboards be instantaneous.

Council member Olson stated an appeal of the moratorium was received from a company that is converting their signs to static digital signs and asked what happened with the appeal. Mr. Ciabatti stated the appeal has not gone to the City Council yet. Ms. Butterfield stated staff wanted to ensure assumptions were not made that static signs were in or out of scope.

Mr. Gunnerson stated staff would like feedback on the types of signs and if there are any areas of concern. Ms. Butterfield stated from a scoping perspective the length of time the images are up is a safety concern so staff would recommend there be a longer hold period. Council member Olson stated digital signs are the new technology and the hold time is of concern. Council member Vernon stated digital signs are fine but they should not be flashing.

Kevin Ciabatti, Building Services Manager, stated there have been no appeals yet but some restaurants are moving to digital signs on for menu boards. Ms. Butterfield stated under the current definitions these are digital signs and staff has been trying to separate the signs that are for certain business operations as opposed to advertising. Council member Vernon stated if it is a digital billboard and it does not change frequently it is fine. It needs to be determined how often the billboards are allowed to change and it needs to be an instantaneous change with no animation. Council member Vernon stated she is in favor of capping and eliminating billboards but as long as they are in the City, having fewer transitions is a good idea.

Council member Vernon stated she would be willing to give more incentives to sign companies if they installed monument signs. Ms. Butterfield stated at the April Development Committee meeting the coverage and square footage of signage, separate from digital and billboard signs, can be discussed. Council member Olson stated the City has a flexible signage ordinance that allows a variety of signs. The issue is not only flashing or digital signs but the entire ordinance should be looked at as it allows for multiple signs and various heights. Council member Vernon stated there are safety issues with signs that are above the tree line and it would be nice to move to monument signs throughout the City. The City has been too flexible and it is time to set standards for the community.

Ms. Butterfield stated when dealing with any type of zoning it takes 10 to 20 years to get the look, feel and appearance of the intent of the narrative. One strategy is to modify the code that impacts the number of signs. As a policy making body the City Council has dialed in on master plan development and Community Development will be bringing forward a new approach utilizing urban revitalization tax exemption. This will focus on neighborhoods in tier two and three that have strip centers that are outdated or do not have sustainable building materials, etc. In the discussions staff will be addressing signage.

Council member Vernon stated the sign standards need to be set now and monument signs are more attractive than other signs. Council member Olson stated the major streets have pole signs in most areas and incentives need to be offered to get people to use monument signs.

Mr. Gunnerson stated staff will return to the April Development Committee with a range of options to move forward with an ordinance to specifically address the sign moratorium. There will be a range of options on billboards and digital signs. Council member Olson stated because

this is a controversial and important subject a good portion of one meeting should be dedicated to this. It would be helpful to have an overview of what the current ordinance allows. A special meeting could also be held that deals with signs only.

3. Kingston Village Plan

Mr. Gunnerson stated in the summer of 2012 the Development Committee asked staff to complete research on the area of the near west side of downtown. In fall 2012, JLG Architects engaged to help the City with an area plan for the area between 1st and 8th Avenue and the Cedar River and 6th Street on the west side. In December 2012 a feedback forum was held with stakeholders and three concepts were presented to get an idea of what was appealing for the Kingston Village Plan. Staff has been working with JLG to complete a final plan.

Mr. Gunnerson presented the three concepts that were shared at the stakeholders meeting. Some of the feedback gathered from the stakeholder meeting included the fact there is strong interest in preserving the 3rd Avenue Historic District. The “Village Green” concept was appealing but the stakeholders felt it should be moved so it did not conflict with existing historic buildings. Other recommendations included the area under I-380 and behind buildings be used for parking as buildings should front the street. Redevelopment needs to be consistent with the existing commercial development and a flood wall should be maintained where possible along 1st Street.

Council member Shey rejoined the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

Mr. Gunnerson provided a draft map received from JLG and stated the map outlines the preservation of the 3rd Avenue Historic District. There would be potential for a plaza or Village Green along 2nd Avenue and there are potential areas where more intense development could take place. Wayfinding and entrance to neighborhoods signs would also be included.

Mr. Gunnerson went over the next steps for the Kingston Village Plan stating JLG will provide a draft plan to staff the week of April 1st. The plan will be previewed with stakeholders in early April and any changes will be made before the formal presentation to Development Committee at the April 30 meeting. Based on the Development Committee recommendation the plan would go to City Council in May for approval. If approved, the plan would be incorporated into future planning in the west side area.

Council member Vernon pointed out the City anticipates the blocks between 1st and 3rd Avenues and 1st and 3rd Street will be requested for the Casino. Council member Olson asked the plan be modified to reflect changes made in the past few months. Ms. Butterfield stated the planned document will discuss scale and context with the use of multi-stories, how buildings address the streets, etc. The narrative will be used to help negotiate the Development Agreements as they relate to City-owned properties. The document will be used to create viable commercial corridors that will release deed restrictions to provide for development. Ms. Butterfield pointed out there are three projects in the Multifamily New Construction Round five in the Kingston Village area.

4. Planned Unit Development Overlay

Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner, stated Community Development and Development Services have been working together on the update to the existing PUD regulations. The last time PUD’s came before the Development Committee was September 2012.

Vern Zakostecky, Development Services Planner, stated PUD's encourage mixed use development, provide better opportunities, more flexibility and encourage infill development. Feedback received from City Council directed the PUD update to include a clear negotiation process to permit modifications in exchange for increase level of design, to be more flexible, and allow for broader mix of uses. PUD's should also help shape and achieve goals of districts, encourage pedestrian accessibility, encourage more density and open space and protect environmentally sensitive areas.

Council member Olson asked what the smallest PUD would be. Mr. Zakostecky stated a size requirement will not be placed on PUD's. The current PUD's are set up by limiting uses based on zoning and the PUD overlay gives the exceptions the City Council can grant. Staff is looking into creating a PUD-1 district with large master planned sites developed in multiple phases and a PUD-2 district with single or mixed-use development sites in a single phase.

Mr. Zakostecky went over the processes that would be followed for PUD-1 and PUD-2 districts stating the PUD-1 process would be longer than the PUD-2 process. Council member Olson asked what the typical timeframe would be for the processes. Mr. Zakostecky stated it would be approximately 90 days to complete the process.

Mr. Zakostecky stated the requirements for a master plan would include submitting a narrative and exhibit while the Preliminary Site Development Plan requirements include submitting a narrative and site plan. Mr. Zakostecky provided a list of potential enhancements that would be in exchange of modifications or variances.

Mr. Zakostecky went over the next steps for the process stating the draft will be finalized in April and will taken to the City Planning Commission on April 25th. A motion setting a City Council public hearing will take place on May 14th with the public hearing on May 28th. The idea is to have the PUD ready for the 2013 construction season.

Council member Vernon stated buildings need to be built up, not out. Ms. Butterfield stated all recent proposals have required more than two stories. City Council has been diligent about making sure the new developments on City-owned properties fit in with the neighborhood and are not out of scale. Council member Vernon stated all new developments need to fit with neighborhoods not just developments on City-owned property.

Council member Shey made a motion to forward the PUD update to City Council. Council member Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

5. Downtown Circulator Bus

Council member Vernon stated there has been talk in the community about doing a circulator bus or trolley that moves people around different parts of the downtown. Council member Olson stated there is another committee that is working on this through the Economic Alliance so the efforts should be coordinated. Sharika Bhakta, Economic Alliance, stated there are several working groups and one is the Transit Committee. The Transit Committee is working to improve transit and downtown circulators have been discussed.

Council member Vernon asked to discuss ways a circulator bus could go from the convention center down 3rd Street to Czech Village and then back to the convention center. Council member

Vernon suggested it be a trolley. Brad DeBrower, Transit Manager, stated the City of Cedar Rapids no longer has trolleys as they were disposed of in 2007.

Council member Vernon stated the circulators would get people to see the rest of downtown after visiting the convention center. The circulators would work best by having a defined route, repeating the route often, having certain stops and allowing people to get on every 5-10 minutes. Council member Olson suggested the route be a loop to include the amphitheatre and eventually the casino. The loop should go on the west side as well as the east side to support all businesses. Council member Vernon stated the circulator system should start on the east side and when the casino is built the circulator can start going to the west side as well. When the circulator goes to both the east and west side people will be able to go straight from the convention center to the casino. The goal would be to have the circulator going from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. every day.

Mr. Gunnerson presented a chart outlining the ballpark cost to operate the circulator system. Mr. DeBrower suggested putting wraps on buses for the downtown circulator. The wraps can be personalized to what the City would like to have. Council member Vernon stated several consultants, over the years, have pointed out the downtown area is larger than what most people want to walk. Council member Olson asked for the cost to get the circulators started, what are other cities spending on circulators and how are other cities funding the circulators. Mr. Gunnerson stated staff will research what other cities are doing and return in April or May.

6. 14th Avenue Alignment

Doug Wilson, Capital Improvement Project Manager, provided four different preliminary concepts for the 14th Avenue SE extension. Options for the extension included a smaller roundabout, t-intersections or a larger roundabout. Using any of the concepts would allow for 4th Street to be eliminated and would provide additional areas for development. Council member Shey asked if Bad Boy Holdings, property owners of 4th Street, would be affected by removing 4th Street. Mr. Wilson stated they would be impacted and this is an option for the long run.

Council member Vernon asked if input was received from St. Wenceslaus Church. Ms. Butterfield stated staff has not met with St. Wenceslaus Church and the concepts are to ensure staff interpreted the interest received from Development Committee correctly. Based upon the input from the Development Committee staff will work with the church and others for feedback.

Council member Olson stated concept #3 should not be considered as it is a traditional t-intersection street and it would not be much different than the current street. Council member Vernon stated concept #1 and #4 are appealing because they have roundabouts. There has been interest in having a roundabout with a statue in the middle of it.

Council member Olson stated an estimate was given in the past of \$2 million to complete this extension and the issue is where the funding would come from. Council member Olson asked if the developer of the upcoming site would be providing funding for this project. Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Planner, stated the typical process includes looking at the City standard policy when in negotiation and it will be on the table as part of the financial incentive. Council member Olson stated if the street extension takes place the assessment needs to be negotiated up front. Ms. Butterfield stated it will be part of the dialogue as there has been a request for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding and its purpose is to provide for public improvements. Council member Olson stated he wants to ensure this is covered as it hard for the City to fund a \$2 million dollar street improvement with a tight budget to begin with. The

dialogue needs to be figured out so it is not a surprise to anyone. Ms. Butterfield stated when the development agreement comes to City Council, staff is aware these are the types of questions that will be asked so there will be a strategy on how to deliver the public improvement.

Council member Vernon stated when looking at the difference between concept #1 and #4, concept #4 has City of Cedar Rapids losing an entire parcel that could be sold. Council member Shey stated concepts #1 and #4 are the most appealing and benefit St. Wenceslaus Church.

Council member Vernon asked Dawn Stevens to provide input on the discussion. Dawn Stevens, Oak Hill Jackson Neighborhood Representative, asked the committee to consider the Resource Center as there are several children crossing 12th Avenue to come to the center. It would great if a crosswalk could be put in for the children to safely get to the Resource Center.

7. Discussion of Elements of Strong Neighborhoods

Ms. Butterfield stated this is part of the framework pieces for driving the Comprehensive Plan. A community is defined by the strength of all of its neighborhoods. Staff researched best practices and found the Congress for New Urbanism stated the five basic design conventions were established as having an identifiable center, walkable size, mixed-use, integrated network of walkable streets and sites for event purposes. Ms. Butterfield presented a list of sustainable urbanism indicators pointing out having at least 5 within ½ mile of the neighborhood creates a complete neighborhood.

Council member Olson stated this would be good criteria for larger PUD's to include. Council member Vernon asked if schools were included as they were not identified on the list. Ms. Butterfield stated the "government office that serves the public onsite" would include the schools but it can be identified separately.

Ms. Butterfield presented a Neighborhood Completeness Indicator pointing out what would identify a neighborhood as excellent, satisfactory, minimal and poor. This would be used when people are looking to find out if their neighborhood is complete. The baseline data can help drive public policies and staff will bring forward, to the Finance and Administrative Committee, an idea to use Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption as a mechanism to drive strip center redevelopment upon a certain criteria. Staff has been looking at an approach that would require the property owner to invest at least 50% of the value of the strip center and incorporate sustainable features. Staff would like to see hard surface broken up and the use of more green space. The improvement to the strip center creates a higher and better use and becomes an amenity to the neighborhood.

Council member Vernon asked if a daycare was included in the list of indicators. Mr. Gunnerson stated there was a long list and it was consolidated for the presentation so schools and daycares may be included just not identified in the presentation. Council member Olson stated when considering a neighborhood the indicators should be identified from the center of the neighborhood and go out ½ mile. Ms. Butterfield stated this list of indicators will help access the needs of neighborhoods and can target resources or partnerships.

8. Tree Planting Plan for FY14

Mr. Wilson stated staff is not going to do the regular tree planting in the spring due to the drought. The tree plantings that will take place will be two CIP projects by Lindale Mall on 1st

Avenue and in the 10th Street Medical Corridor. At the last Infrastructure Committee the process for planting trees and options were discussed. The current process is to replace trees as they are damaged or dying in the right of way. The Infrastructure Committee discussed options such as focusing on specific neighborhoods to maximize the impact of the tree plantings as they are currently dispersed and not noticed or having a signature corridor where plantings are focused. It was recommended a higher profile area be chosen to create a higher impact in the community.

Council member Olson stated the Infrastructure Committee set aside money for replacing damaged and dying trees and the rest of the budget would go toward planting trees that make a difference in the community. Council member Vernon stated there needs to be an impact and 1st Avenue, mall to mall, is the main roadway and it needs to be complete. It would also be nice to pick a roadway on the west and east sides to focus on as well and Mt. Vernon Road and Edgewood Road would be signature streets. Council member stated to get a better impact, higher quality trees need to be planted that are taller and planted further apart. Mr. Wilson stated staff will go back to the Infrastructure Committee with proposals.

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

Meeting adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development