



City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, May 22, 2013
3:00 p.m.

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

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair), Olson and Shey. Staff members present: Joe O'Hern, Interim Community Development Director; Caleb Mason, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist; Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner; Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager; Kevin Ciabatti, Building Services Manager; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Alex Sharpe, Community Development Planner; Adam Lindenlaub, Community Development Planner; and Alicia Abernathey, 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 City staff, Council members and sometimes citizens.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to approve the minutes from April 30, 2013. Council member Olson made a motion to approve the minutes from April 30, 2013. Council member Vernon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

1. Blue Zones Project Community Pledge

Stephanie Neff, Healthway/Blue Zones, stated Cedar Rapids was selected in January to be a demonstration site with the intent of enhancing the wellbeing of Cedar Rapidians through environmental and policy changes that make health living easier. This is done in a number of ways through a variety of different sectors including schools, restaurants, grocery stores, etc. The City has been very progressive in a lot of areas and have met certain standards that will help reach community certification. City Council support is needed to establish an ongoing commitment to the best practices that are listed in the Blue Zones Community Policy Pledge for optimizing the environment to improve wellbeing. Ms. Neff stated she is looking for approval from the Development Committee to take a resolution to the full City Council on June 11th.

Council member Olson asked if cities participating in the program have to adopt ordinances as part of the process. Ms. Neff stated it is one of the many components of participating in the Blue Zones Community Policy Pledge.

Council member Olson made a motion to recommend adoption of the resolution to City Council. Council member Vernon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

2. Restrictive Covenants – City Properties

Caleb Mason, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist, stated the presentation will focus on the establishment of restrictive covenants for properties where the City is involved with the redevelopment. This discussion began when staff brought several proposals to the City Council and City Council directed staff to pursue development agreements. Discussion took place regarding limiting the types of uses permitted in the structures, particularly in the Kingston Village area. Based on the discussion, staff began researching best practices on use restrictions.

Council member Shey joined the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

Mr. Mason defined restrictive covenants and identified the use, purpose and term period. Mr. Mason presented a staff recommendation to establish restrictive covenants that will be incorporated into the Development Agreement and run with the title of the property. The restrictive covenants would incorporate approved uses, prohibited uses, and conditional uses. Mr. Mason identified uses that would fall under approved, prohibited and conditional uses.

Council member Olson stated some of the prohibited uses are currently in the Kingston Village area and asked how that would work with the restrictive covenants. Mr. Mason stated the deed restrictions would only apply to City owned properties and it would not affect properties that are currently developed. Council member Shey asked if uses could be removed from the restrictive covenants if they were determined to be good for economic development. Mr. Mason stated City Council would have the power to modify the restrictive covenants as necessary.

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

3. Westdale Design Guidelines

John Frew, Frew Development, stated the development agreement that was approved between Frew Development and the City of Cedar Rapids included certain obligations that Frew Development has to invest \$90 million in improvements. The development agreement also defines design guidelines for the design, construction and maintenance of the improvements. The design guidelines were not complete at the time the development agreement was approved but it was identified that City Council was to adopt the design guidelines upon completion. Mr. Frew identified the purpose of the design guidelines and stated the guidelines are broken into four sections including site design, architecture, urban design and signage. Mr. Frew presented master plans for the structure, pedestrian accessibility, landscaping, parking and renderings.

Council member Shey made a motion to bring the design guidelines to City Council. Council member Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

4. Neighborhood Certification Process

Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner, stated the Neighborhood Certification Process would be a step for improving communications and accountability between the City and the neighborhood associations. Desired outcomes include formalizing and enhancing existing relationships, building capacity for leadership and increased participation, establishing the needs and goals of each neighborhood and eventually targeting funding toward neighborhood improvement projects. Mr. Smith discussed in detail the Neighborhood Certification Process.

Council member Olson asked if neighborhood associations could receive City funds if they are not certified. Mr. Smith stated neighborhood associations have to be certified to receive funds.

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

5. NDC Request

Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager, stated this request is similar to other requests the City has received and reviewed in the past for City owned parcels that were acquired through the Voluntary Acquisition Program. Neighborhood Development Corporation of Cedar Rapids (NDC) was awarded Multi-Family New Construction funds in July 2010 to construct 10 units. NDC currently owns five units on 2nd Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets and their request is for three additional City owned parcels on the same block. Ms. Mitchell stated staff is recommending the properties go through the typical request for proposals (RFP) process and outlined the proposed criteria for the RFP.

Council member Shey recused himself from discussion.

Council member Olson made a motion to move forward with the process. Council member Vernon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

6. Sign Ordinance Update

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated the Development Committee recommended an ordinance for billboards at the April 30th Meeting that would establish a cap on billboards and reduce maximum size of billboards. It would not allow new billboards downtown and would clarify code language with regard to variance applications. The City Planning Commission (CPC) reviewed the recommendations on May 16th and recommended approval of the ordinance with an additional recommendation that if a new sign applicant owns a non-conforming sign, a non-conforming sign must be removed to satisfy the requirements of the cap.

Mr. Gunnerson presented digital sign recommendations including the following:

- 8 second hold time
- 500 foot separation from residential, and other uses such as parks, schools, and historic districts
- No flashing, animation, video or scrolling text
- Dimmer function required to reduce brightness at night
- Emergency access
- Non-conforming signs may not be upgraded to digital

Council members Olson, Shey and Vernon showed support for the digital sign recommendations.

Mr. Gunnerson stated if City Council is interested in limiting the number of digital billboard signs, options are available for doing so. The three options are as follows:

- ***Ban on Digital Billboard Displays:*** No new digital display billboards would be permitted in the city. The criteria above would apply to those already existing.
- ***Increased Separation:*** A digital display sign must be a conforming sign and must be located at least 2,000 feet from another digital display sign. This would limit the number of billboards signs that could be digital.

- **Additional Replacement:** Would require removal of two static signs to build a new digital sign.

Council member Shey made a motion to proceed with the Additional Replacement option. Council member Vernon seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of two to one.

Mr. Gunnerson discussed digital display attributes stating all new signs must comply with all sections of the ordinance. In addition, all existing signs must comply with hold time, animation, and scrolling text standards by January 1, 2014. The criteria for signs does not apply to signs which display only alphanumeric text and do not change more than once per hour or only display time and temperature. It also does not apply to signs not meant to be visible from the public right of way such as digital menuboard signs for drive thru-facilities.

Mr. Gunnerson provided the following options for digital display attributes for Development Committee consideration:

Options		Hold time (Signs over 64 sq. ft.)	Hold Time (All other Signs)	Transition	Animation/ Video	Scrolling Text
A	No Animation Minimum Hold Time Scrolling Text Allowed	1 second		n/a	Not allowed	Allowed
B	No Animation Establish Tiered Hold Times Scrolling Text Not Allowed	8 seconds	4 seconds	< 1 second	Not allowed	Not allowed
C	No Animation Establish Tiered Hold Times Scrolling Text Allowed	8 seconds	4 seconds	< 1 second	Not allowed	Allowed

Council member Olson made a motion to move forward with Option C. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Mr. Gunnerson provided the following options for types and sizes of digital signs:

1. Limit digital displays to monument and marquee signs
2. Limit digital display to 25% of allowable sign area on pole signs
3. Limit digital displays on freestanding signs to 20 feet off the ground (maximum height for monument or bracket sign in O-S District) except along I-380

Council member Vernon stated she was in favor of numbers one and three but was not in favor of number two. Council member Vernon stated she would like all new signs to be bracket signs rather than pole signs and the bracket signs can be limited to 50% of their total area.

Mr. Gunnerson presented the idea of an Entertainment Sign Overlay District that would allow signs that incorporated flashing lights, animation and motion videos. Mr. Gunnerson identified the boundaries for the district. Council members Olson, Shey and Vernon showed support for the Entertainment Sign Overlay District.

7. Comprehensive Plan

Adam Lindenlaub, Community Development Planner, stated the process for moving forward with the Comprehensive Plan is to identify issues that were not addressed or were not planned for during the River Corridor Redevelopment Plan, Neighborhood Planning Process, Parks and

Recreation Master Plan, Facilities Master Plan, and the Downtown Area Plan. Staff will use focus groups, surveys, public meetings and stakeholder meetings to gather feedback.

Mr. Lindenlaub stated the Comprehensive Plan will have seven (7) elements that will form a framework to help guide policy decisions. The seven elements include:

- Housing Strategies
- Community Facilities and Services
- Neighborhoods and Nodes
- Community Vitality
- Parks and Open Space
- Hazard Mitigation
- Connectivity and Corridors

Mr. Lindenlaub stated as part of the process a Steering Committee will be used for guidance and will include representation from several different entities. Mr. Lindenlaub provided a timeline and identified next steps for the Comprehensive Plan.

Council member Olson made a motion to proceed with Comprehensive Plan Update Process. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

8. Wayfinding Signage

Mr. Smith stated staff has returned to provide a concept for the wayfinding signage that will be used in the downtown area. Staff has been working with a designer over the past several months to come up with an idea. The signs will be designed to be attractable and last five to ten years. The Public Works Department will be installing the signs and they believe the colors chosen for the sign will not conflict with any other signage already placed around the city.

Mr. Smith stated there will be 17 locations for the signs downtown with 1st Avenue and 3rd Street SE receiving the majority of the signs. The signs will provide wayfinding to institutions such as the Paramount Theatre, Amphitheatre, Convention Center, NewBo City Market, museums, etc.

Council member Shey made a motion to move forward with the wayfinding signs. Council member Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

9. Alcohol and Tobacco Distance Separation Ordinance

Mr. Smith stated in July 2011 the state code was amended to allow the sale of liquor at places that also sell gasoline. Since that time, a number of gas stations or convenience stores and small-scale retail locations around the City have proposed or began the sale of liquor. Some of the stores are located near residential neighborhoods, schools, and other sensitive uses. Other large Iowa cities have adopted stronger regulations around the sale of liquor by businesses that have limited retail operations, like convenience stores and gas stations.

Mr. Smith stated concerns have been received from neighborhood leaders regarding the effects of these businesses and asked the City to explore the issue. Cedar Rapids currently controls the location of businesses selling liquor or beer by requiring a 300 foot separation from a church or school measured from front door to front door along the sidewalk or street right-of-way.

Mr. Smith stated staff researched seven Iowa communities and three have more stringent regulations than Cedar Rapids. Mr. Smith identified how Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines and Waterloo compare in terms of four categories. The categories include types of uses protected through separation distance, the amount of distance separation, exemptions and other protections.

Mr. Smith stated staff will continue to discuss the matter and will bring back recommendations to Development Committee at upcoming meetings.

10. Parklets

Mr. Gunnerson stated staff is currently in the process of purchasing four parklets and meeting with businesses along 3rd Street for potential places to locate the parklets. The target date for parklet installation is July 1st. Mr. Gunnerson stated some of the parklets may be placed on the avenues as some locations on 3rd Street are not practical for placement of a parklet.

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 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development