



**City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, June 26, 2013
3:00 p.m.**

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

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair) and Olson. Staff members present: Joe O’Hern, Community Development Interim Director; Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner; Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Steve O’Konek, Police Captain; Ray Nees, Assistant Building Services Manager; 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 May 22, 2013. Council member Olson made a motion to approve the minutes from May 22, 2013. Council member Vernon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Informational Items and Updates – Multi-Family New Construction

Paula Mitchell, Grant Programs Manager, stated Cedar Rapids competed in the latest round of disaster recovery funding to replace housing units. Cedar Rapids submitted 10 proposals to IEDA for review and seven were awarded funding. Ms. Mitchell provided details on the awarded projects including location, elevations, number and types of units. Joe O’Hern, Community Development Interim Director, stated there is over \$10,000,000 in assistance. Ms. Mitchell stated City Council will start to see agenda items pertaining to these projects in the near future, in terms of land development as well as development agreements.

1. Prospect Meadows

Jack Roeder, Prospect Meadows Inc., stated this project, when completed, could add approximately \$25,000,000 to the local economy’s direct spending each year. Mr. Roeder identified projected annual totals for visitors to the facility and hotel rooms occupied.

Tim Strellner, Prospect Meadows Inc., stated they are very interested in appealing to the local leagues as well as out of town leagues from all over the country. There will be a total of 17 baseball diamonds of different sizes to serve all levels of leagues. Mr. Strellner identified the project costs and the commitments of funding already received.

Council member Olson asked what the continued funding would be. Mr. Roeder stated the project will be self-sustaining with approximately a \$3,000,000 budget when the baseball diamonds are fully operational. Council member Olson asked if there will be a request for the City of Cedar Rapids to provide funding. Mr. Roeder stated they would ask for assistance with the capital campaign aspect. Council member Vernon suggested the specific impact on the City of Cedar Rapids be included when presented to City Council.

2. Alcohol and Tobacco Distance Separation

Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner, stated staff recommends discussion of this topic in segments and returning to the Development Committee in August with a final recommendation from staff. Neighborhood leaders have expressed concerns regarding the effects of stand-alone alcohol and tobacco outlets.

Council member Vernon pointed out the Legislature made changes pertaining to alcohol and tobacco which contributed to the proposed changes that staff is presenting.

Mr. Smith identified the current separation distance and types of uses protected through the separation distance for Cedar Rapids and other Iowa cities. Mr. Smith provided options for Development Committee consideration for proposed ordinance changes.

Council member Olson stated he is in favor of the concept of separation distance between similar businesses but 2,700 feet is extensive and should be closer to 600 ft. The conditional use permit provides a way to correct issues with businesses. Many landlords are not allowing these kinds of businesses to go in their buildings. There is a community wide effort to make a change.

Council member Vernon stated she is in favor of the way Davenport and Waterloo handled the topic as missions, public libraries, places where children are and schools should be included as part of the separation distance. Some of these businesses do not keep a tidy appearance and if conditional uses were used it would be a way to ensure the businesses are kept up in appearance.

3. Kingston Design Review Overlay

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated staff is inquiring about interest to establish an overlay district in the Kingston Village area. City Council adopted a plan for the area in May 2013 and one of the goals was to come with criteria for an overlay district. Cedar Rapids currently has two overlay districts including the Czech Bohemia Overlay District and the Ellis Area Overlay District. Overlay Districts set zoning criteria unique to the neighborhood and have Design Review Technical Advisory Committees (DRTAC). DRTAC reviews applications for new construction, building additions and exterior rehabilitation within the overlay district.

Council member Vernon stated overlay districts empower neighborhoods to help set design standards. It is important the people who live and invest in the neighborhood have an input.

Council member Olson asked how many people on the committees were experts versus residents of the area. Mr. Gunnerson stated it is about half and half as far as residents and experts. Council member Olson asked what the reaction has been of developers that have gone before the review committees. Mr. Gunnerson stated there have been productive discussions with helpful dialogue. The recommendations of the committees are advisory in nature and get passed along to the final reviewing body such as City Planning Commission or City Council.

4. Wellington Heights Plan

Ms. Mitchell stated this is the culmination of a planning process that has been underway for the Wellington Heights neighborhood. The funding for the plan was provided through the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement funding. SAA Design Group provided the technical services to develop the plan, assisted with stakeholder meetings and put together a framework plan. Ms. Mitchell identified a timeline of key events that contributed to the plan creation. The following topics were also discussed in detail:

- Unique Assets of Wellington Heights
- Plan Elements
- Plan Principles
- Social Capital & Public Safety
- Housing & Historic Character
- Economic Vitality
- Transportation & Connectivity
- Open Space & Recreation
- Aesthetics & Neighborhood Design
- Sustainability

Council member Vernon stated the plan aligns with City Council and staff goals and discussions. The lighting can serve a number of purposes as it makes the neighborhood look charming like the historic district that it is and it also makes for a safer place.

Council member Olson stated the direction of the plan is strong and there was good participation in the meetings but the key is the implementation. The elements of the plan that the City can afford to fund and will have the greatest impact on the neighborhood need to be identified first.

Council member Vernon requested staff provide the priorities that the City can put money toward that would leverage the most private investments.

5. Nuisance Abatement Update

Steve O'Konek, Police Captain, stated the official name of the program is now the SAFE CR Program or Secure and Friendly Environment Cedar Rapids. Over the last few months staff has worked on hiring new team members for the program and have also reached out to organizations to develop a SAFE Advisory Team. The SAFE Advisory Team is made up of social service agencies, non-profit organizations, realtors, landlords, Affordable Housing Network, etc. Mr. O'Konek identified completed steps and upcoming steps for the SAFE CR program.

Ray Nees, Assistant Building Services Manager, stated training will be provided to approximately 2,300 landlords before they are allowed to register their units. Kirkwood Community College will be providing the meeting room and will complete the registration. Up to 600 landlords can be trained at one time and the first class is scheduled for September 9th. The Police Department has received training for the program. Mr. Nees pointed out abuse of the system and use of the City resources will be charged back to the property owner.

Council member Olson stated nuisances are currently being handled by Building Services and asked if duties will be relieved due to the new department. Mr. O'Konek stated the current staff completing this work will continue to do so.

6. Sign Ordinance Update

Mr. Gunnerson stated City Council held a Public Hearing on June 25th regarding the Digital Sign Ordinance and directed staff to make modifications to the ordinance. On July 9th the Public Hearing will be continued with a potential First Reading of the ordinance. Staff has identified some issues and the update is to ensure nothing is missing. Mr. Gunnerson presented options for Development Committee consideration pertaining to the sign moratorium.

Council member Olson stated it would be beneficial to have the moratorium complete after the First Reading of the ordinance but still have a Second and Third Reading at a later date to ensure people can be heard if there are any objections.

Mr. Gunnerson identified aspects of the revised ordinance including on premise digital signs and digital billboard signs. Mr. Gunnerson discussed outstanding issues including the possibility of requiring permits or conditional uses for the use of videos on digital billboards.

Council member Olson stated a dialogue has been created with the signage companies and suggested credit unions and billboard companies are involved in stakeholder meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development