



**City of Cedar Rapids**  
**DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**City Hall Council Chambers**  
**Wednesday, January 22, 2014**  
**4:00 p.m.**

The meeting was brought to order at 4:05 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair), Shey and Weinacht. Staff members present: Gary Kranse, Community Development Director; Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Assistant Director; Adam Lindenlaub, Community Development Planner; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Caleb Mason, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist; Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner; Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner; and Alicia Abernathey, 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 November 20, 2013. Council member Shey made a motion to approve the minutes from November 20, 2013. Council member Weinacht seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

### **Informational Items and Updates**

Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Assistant Director, stated there has been a disposition process for properties the City acquired following the 2008 flood. A proposal was received for a vacant property that is along 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue SW. The proposal was not received in time for it to be on the agenda but staff would like to take the request to City Council to set a public hearing for competitive proposals. Properties in the area have gone through the competitive proposals process and the same criteria will be used.

### **2. Comprehensive Plan Update**

Pat Boddy, RDG Planning & Design Partner, explained the three basic phases of public engagement including community profile, vision and goals and recommendations, priorities and implementation. RDG is currently in the process of studying factors of Cedar Rapids to translate them into goals and principles. As the project moves forward development concepts and plan elements will be identified. Online tools will be used for public engagement.

Cory Scott, RDG Planning & Design Partner, stated a kick-off meeting will take place in February to provide a brief overview of what a comprehensive plan is and is not. The meeting will allow for people to get an understanding of the individual components that make up the

plan. Mr. Scott identified other meetings that will take place throughout the upcoming months to engage people in the comprehensive plan update.

Ms. Boddy stated the input received indicates Cedar Rapids is a community where people want to look forward and want to complete this kind of work. Ms. Boddy stated work has been done by City staff to develop a brand for the update to the comprehensive plan which is EnvisionCR.

Council member Shey asked how often a comprehensive plan should be completed. Gary Kranse, Community Development Director, stated updating the plan every 5-8 years would be best. It would be beneficial to review the plan every year to ensure the basic philosophies are being followed. There may be things that change over a short period of time that need to be reacted to so the plan needs to be flexible enough to accommodate changes.

Council member Shey asked why a citizen of Cedar Rapids should want to be engaged in this process. Ms. Boddy stated the planning that has been done in the most recent past in Cedar Rapids has been reactive planning. Cedar Rapids was hit by a tragedy and had to come back from the tragedy. There is a great deal of interest in moving forward and doing proactive planning to shape the Cedar Rapids that people want to live in for the future, without the flood being the driving force. People want their quality of life to be the driving force. They also want what their children are doing, their jobs and the schools to be the driving force. The phrase EnvisionCR should be used to get people envisioning Cedar Rapids' future as a place where people want to live and stay.

### **1. A Revitalization Strategy for the Cedar Lake Area**

Dale Todd, Friends of Cedar Lake, stated Friends of Cedar Lake is made up of a diverse group of people including engineers, neighbors of Cedar Lake and people who use the lake such as bicyclists, joggers, fisherman, etc. The Friends of Cedar Lake group has been instructed to put a plan together to establish a vision of what Cedar Lake could be.

Rich Patterson, Friends of Cedar Lake, stated there is a phenomenon of cities looking for bodies of water downtown or close to downtown to develop for recreation. Friends of Cedar Lake are looking into resources to make the water quality of Cedar Lake better in order to enhance recreation and the general environmental health of Cedar Rapids.

Mr. Todd stated Friends of Cedar Lake secured the services of Confluence and they came up with a preliminary draft of possibilities for Cedar Lake. Discussion of what to do with Cedar Lake has been going on for years and numerous plans for the lake have been approved. Mr. Todd presented the current flood alignment plan and stated Friends of Cedar Lake think the plan should be expanded to protect businesses in the area. Mr. Todd presented options for potential funding sources and also presented concepts for different uses of the lake.

### **3. Urban Agriculture**

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated staff met with area stakeholders and the Blue Zones Committee regarding ways to improve the ordinance as it currently exists for urban agriculture. In 2011 City Council adopted an ordinance that allows urban agriculture. The ordinance allows urban agriculture as a primary use on vacant residential lots. However, the ordinance does not allow vacant commercial or industrial lots to be used for agriculture purposes and it does not address whether or not urban agriculture can be an accessory use on a parcel. Mr.

Gunnerson provided a definition for urban agriculture and identified the benefits. Mr. Gunnerson listed proposed changes to the urban agriculture ordinance and the permitting requirements. Mr. Gunnerson stated the proposed changes will be included in a larger update to Chapter 32.

#### **4. Single Family New Construction (SFNC) Round Four**

Caleb Mason, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist stated the City has the budget authority of \$11,000,000 in the fourth round of Single Family New Construction (SFNC), also known as ROOTs. The City is required to submit a plan to the State of Iowa no later than February 28<sup>th</sup>. The primary objective of SFNC is to replace the units lost through the 2008 flood. Mr. Mason explained the program criteria and explained the program results since 2009.

Council member Shey asked if there would only be single family homes or if there would be variations in the buildings. Mr. Mason stated there will be variations in the housing styles as there may be row style housing similar to what is proposed for Ellis Boulevard. Council member Shey asked if there was a waiting list for the program and if willing buyers are placed with contractors to build the homes. Mr. Mason stated the first step is qualifying people to participate and there are approximately 400 families that are qualified. The builders, locations and floor plans are listed on the housing website and the families do the footwork themselves.

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

#### **5. Disposition Process –**

- a) 720 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NW**
- b) 615 K Avenue NW**

Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner, stated staff is bringing forward two City-owned properties that were acquired post flood and seeking feedback on opening up the properties for a competitive proposal process. 720 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NW was discussed by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in November 2013 and the HPC recommended the property for potential reuse. The HPC reached out to the development community and held a tour of the property. Following the tour two letters of interest were received for the property. The property is located outside of the 500 year floodplain and is not located in an historic or overlay district.

Mr. Smith stated 615 K Avenue NW was discussed by the Flood Recovery Committee in December 2013 and it was recommended proposals be sought for reuse of the structure or potential new development on this parcel. The lot is located in the 100 year floodplain and is located in the overlay district for the area and all proposals would have to comply. The Ellis Plan shows the property at a more intense commercial node for the neighborhood. Mr. Smith identified three parcels the City owns that are contiguous with 615 K Avenue NW and stated the properties could be part of a potential development proposal. Mr. Smith identified the criteria that would be used in the competitive proposal process for both properties.

Council member Shey asked if Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding was used to acquire the properties. Mr. Smith stated that was correct. Council member Shey asked if there are any restrictions when selling the lots and if the funds have to go back to CDBG. Caleb Mason stated the fair market value of the property will have to be returned back to the Federal Government. Council member Shey stated neither property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and asked what the reason was. Mr. Smith stated they would not be eligible if

there was an alteration that changed the nature of the building or if there was an impact that deteriorated the historic significance.

## **6. NewBo Station Project – 1020 & 1028 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE (Former Brosh Chapel site)**

Ms. Pratt provided background and chronology of events that have taken place regarding the redevelopment of 1020 and 1028 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE. Ms. Pratt identified changes from the proposed plan to the finalized plan including changes in total investment, building size, mix of uses and City participation. Ms. Pratt presented renderings and identified the timeline for completion.

Council member Shey asked what is required to ensure the developer is financially feasible. Ms. Pratt stated a financial commitment letter from a bank is required as part of the competitive proposal process. The amount from the bank is shown in the sources and uses of funds. Due to the changes of the proposed project an updated financial letter was requested and received.

Council member Shey asked what protection the City has that the project will be completed. Ms. Pratt stated specific milestones must be met by specific dates. There is a legal recourse if the milestones are not complete including not receiving the TIF and possibly recourse of land.

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

## **7. Commercial Setbacks**

Mr. Gunnerson stated the goals for commercial setbacks include maintaining a “street wall” in established corridors, encouraging increased quality of design and flexibility. Mr. Gunnerson identified aspects of the current city code pertaining to setbacks and provided examples.

Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner, provided maps of major roadways in Cedar Rapids outlining the different setbacks of buildings along the roadways.

Mr. Gunnerson stated a number of communities are switching to a code that dictates setback requirements based on how close the property is to the core of the City and what district the property is in. Mr. Gunnerson presented approaches for setbacks. Staff will continue to research options and further discussion will take place at future 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 Weinacht seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II  
Community Development