



**City of Cedar Rapids  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES  
City Hall Training Room  
Wednesday, November 19, 2014  
4:00 p.m.**

The meeting was brought to order at 4:03 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair) and Shey. Staff members present: Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Anne Russett, Community Development Planner; Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner; Sara Buck, Housing Programs Manager; Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager; and Anne Kroll, Community Development Administrative Assistant. Commission members present: Scott Overland, Chair, City Planning Commission; Bill Stamats, Chair, Visual Arts Commission; and Amanda McKnight-Grafton, Chair, Historic Preservation Commission.

Council member Shey motioned to approve the minutes from October 15, 2014. Council member Vernon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Presentations:**

**1. City Planning Commission Work Plan**

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated that The City Planning Commission (CPC) is a body required by State statute to review and make recommendations to the City Council on matters related to the zoning ordinance. This includes land development applications such as rezoning and preliminary plats, along with amendments to the zoning ordinance. The Development Services Department works with the CPC on reviewing and presenting Land Development cases, while the Community Development Department continues to work with the CPC on code and policy updates.

Scott Overland, Chair, City Planning Commission, stated that some of the items on the work plan are ongoing year to year. Increasingly, they are looking more at sustainable practices. CPC will take advantage of training opportunities and conferences. The Commission will bring guest speakers into their meetings to learn more about upcoming projects. EnvisionCR and the Comprehensive Plan will bring many projects as well as the change in the Zoning Code. CPC will continue to be available to assist the City Council from an informational standpoint.

Council member Vernon expressed interest in sending an email stating that the Council members on the Development Committee strongly urge the City Planning Commission to attend Trees Forever.

**2. Visual Arts Commission Work Plan**

Bill Stamats, Chair, Visual Arts Commission, stated that most of the items on the work plan are ongoing. The Commission took some of the city's collection and found a home for them and would like to put more pieces in City Hall. The airport wants to let go of some of their pieces and they could be placed in the Public Services building. The Commission is working on a brochure of the City's collection and it should be complete by early 2015. The Commission is giving recommendations to the Linn County Visual Arts Commission for the gift for Greene Square.

Mr. Gunnerson stated that the Commission is in the final stages of an RFP to hire someone for professional services to assess the condition of the art in the City, identify what maintenance is needed, and hopefully get the art on a rotation to be assessed over the years. The Commission is also working with the 2% policy to identify if there's an opportunity to place art as part of the projects the City has coming up.

Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director, stated that it is 2% of projects, but doesn't include projects that have FEMA funding or that type of funding. The concept is 1% is for actual artwork and 1% is to help cover the ongoing maintenance and insurance. The issue is that, even though it is a City funded project, funds for future maintenance needs cannot be pooled. Council member Vernon encouraged the Visual Arts Commission to come to the City Council with any ideas or opportunities that might arise.

### **3. Historic Preservation Commission Work Plan**

Amanda McKnight-Grafton, Chair, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), spoke about the accomplishments of the HPC. They include:

- Reviewed 10 certificates of appropriateness and 41 demolition applications
- Partnered with other organizations on the 2014 Preserve Iowa Summit and hosted the third annual Preservation Awards ceremony to honor the City's most outstanding preservation efforts
- Completed the following projects from the FEMA Memorandums of Agreement:
  - Designation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue SW Commercial National Historic District, accepted by the National Park Service in Summer 2014
  - Completion of the *Cedar Rapids Citywide Historic and Architectural Reconnaissance Survey*

Ms. McKnight-Grafton discussed the five goals of the HPC:

**Goal 1:** Participate in preservation, salvage, and documentation of historic structures.

**Tasks:**

- Prepare a list of criteria to aid property owners, developers, and others in the identification of potentially historic buildings
- Explore potential financing strategies and economic incentives and recommend incorporation into the Historic Preservation Plan. HPC is exploring funding from other grants, financial institutions that would be willing to offer low interest loans, assistance from other nonprofit organizations, and looking at other cities close by that have received grants that they can offer as a city to their citizens.
- Continue recommending improvements to historic preservation ordinance and processes through the development of the Historic Preservation Plan. HPC is seeing success in the demolition application process.

**Goal 2: Increase communication**

**Tasks:**

- Continue to improve the HPC website for ease of use and to provide more information
- Create informational brochure(s) to explain benefits of historic districts and HPC processes

**Goal 3: Improve Public Relations**

**Tasks:**

- Send brochure to all property owners in historic districts explaining benefits and requirements
- Continue to honor exemplary preservation efforts through annual Community Preservation Awards and the Preservation Showcase. The next showcase will be May 2, 2015.

**Goal 4: Provide information and educational opportunities for the public**

**Tasks:**

- Hold two trainings per year on various practical preservation topics like adaptive reuse, wood window repair, and brick tuckpointing
- Plan and host the 2015 Preservation Showcase
- Develop historic district markers and signage to help the public identify key historic areas and landmarks. The goal is to have them installed by the spring of 2015.

**Goal 5: Provide educational opportunities for HPC members**

**Tasks:**

- Continue to provide outside training opportunities, and encourage attendance at the 2015 Preservation Showcase

Ms. McKnight-Grafton discussed the upcoming events/ongoing efforts of the HPC:

- 2015 Preservation Showcase scheduled for Saturday, May 2
- Working toward the City's first nomination of a local landmark
- Continue to work with the City staff to implement various projects from the FEMA Memorandums of Agreement, including the development of a Historic Preservation Plan and the Downtown National Historic District

Council member Shey inquired about how to encourage people to have their neighborhood become a historical district. Ms. McKnight-Grafton stated that the surveys have helped HPC to identify potential local historic district. Council member Vernon inquired about having the HPC present at neighborhood meetings. Ms. McKnight-Grafton stated that the HPC has done a few meetings and will continue to reach out to the neighborhood associations.

Council member Vernon showed appreciation of the positive approach with the awards. What Cedar Rapids is doing since the flood is creating a different culture. The combination of things happening is making people realize that old buildings are important. People like to see the older buildings being preserved. Council member Vernon stated the signage in the historic district and on historical buildings is important because Cedar Rapids has so much history that needs to be documented before it is lost. Council member Vernon commented on the importance of historical tours.

**Recommendation Items:**

**1. Communication Tower**

Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner, described the communications facilities timeline thus far:

- Public Engagement on:
  - August 13 – Citizens with industry professionals
  - September 10– Citizen only input session
  - October 20 – Citizen only input session
  - November 5 – Industry professionals phone conference update
- Resulted in recommended changes today

Mr. Hintz stated that the recommended changes are:

- Tower placement based on distance from existing detached one and two family units
- Establishment of a three tier system where tiers determine the following:
  - Notification requirements
  - Height of tower
  - Materials used in construction of facility
  - Process length

Mr. Hintz showed a chart that described each of the three tiers and displayed maps that showed the distance between 500 feet and 300 feet.

Council member Vernon stated that if these are built they should be stealthed as much as possible. Council member Vernon is interested in what extremely progressive cities are doing.

Council members Vernon and Shey agreed to move forward with unanimous consent.

Mr. Hintz reminded the Committee of the next steps:

- Dec. 2 – Motion setting a public hearing
- Dec. 4 – City Planning Commission review and recommendation
- Dec. 16 – Public hearing and 1<sup>st</sup> reading of proposed ordinance
- Jan. 13 – 2<sup>nd</sup> and possible 3<sup>rd</sup> reading

## **2. Administrative Plan**

Sara Buck, Housing Programs Manager, discussed the following program details:

- Administration of the program for 37 years
- Public Housing Authority (PHA) for Linn and Benton Counties
- Federally Funded Program by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)
- Program is designed to accommodate very low-income families and individuals with rent assistance for decent, safe, and sanitary housing provided by private owners and rental agents.

Ms. Buck discussed who they served this year:

- 2014 New Admissions
  - 92% Iowa Residents
  - 8% Other States – These people applied in another state and then moved to Iowa
- Current Participants:
  - 13% Elderly
  - 40% Disabled

Ms. Buck discussed the background for the reasoning of the changes. The waitlist has been closed since November 2011 because there were 4,000 people on it with a 3-5 year wait. In preparation for reopening the waitlist, City Staff met with Community Service Agencies on October 29, 2014 to discuss policy and procedures. Current Policy requires the waitlist to remain open until it reaches approximately 60 months (5 years) worth of applicants. Because of this urgent needs are not being met and the success rate drops from 75% to 25% after two years.

Ms. Buck stated the proposed changes are to update PHA Policy within the Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan to allow the waitlist to be closed with 24 months (2 years) of applicants. This allows the PHA to open the waitlist more often, better meeting the community need. The success rate will increase with more recent applications and decrease the cost of purging the waitlist annually. These changes are recommended by HUD.

Council member Shey asked how the waitlist is prioritized. Ms. Buck stated that the applications on the waitlist are sorted by preference first and then by time and date of application. The last preference would be applicants from out of state without children.

Ms. Buck reviewed the timeline:

- Dec. 2 – Motion setting a public hearing
- Dec. 16 – Public hearing
- Jan. 13 – Resolution to City Council

Ms. Pratt stated that on December 16 Ms. Buck will provide Council a more in depth overview.

Council members Vernon and Shey agreed to move forward with unanimous consent.

## **Informational Items**

### **1. Low Income Housing Tax Credits**

Ms. Pratt stated that there are no Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects at this time. Ms. Pratt explained that staff met with IFA representatives and it is believed that the reason behind this is there are so many projects for the Multifamily New Construction Program.

Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager, stated that 16 applications were submitted and forwarded it IEDA. IEDA is expected to notify people of awards in January.

### **Public Comment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kroll, Administrative Assistant II  
Community Development