



**City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, February 18, 2015
4:00 p.m.**

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

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair) and Weinacht. Staff members present: Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager; and Anne Kroll, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council members Weinacht and Vernon approved the minutes from January 21, 2015 with unanimous consent.

Recommendation Items:

1. Proposed Updates to Expend ROOTs Funding

Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager, stated that this is a process for the City to fully utilize the remaining ROOTs funding available through this fourth and last round of the program. There is \$11.1 million available to the City to replace lost housing units. Approximately 614 units have been constructed in Rounds 1-3. In Round 4, we have allocated 156 units to date, with 120 of those in Tier 1 and 36 in Tiers 2 and 3. The budget available will allocate approximately 44 additional units. Some of the considerations are insufficient buildable infill lots to expend the remaining budget, builder interest to expand building outside Tier 1, a need to balance market absorption both inside and outside the core neighborhood, and the possible need to reallocate units that do not proceed to Development Agreement. Notices have been sent to builders that have not gotten to a Development Agreement stage yet to assess their progress and interest in continuing. The deadline to respond is at the end of the month. Recommendations are that builders may be awarded up to one unit outside Tier 1 for each unit they have constructed in a previous program round regardless of location, priority will continue to be Tier 1 locations (publicly or privately owned), builders must demonstrate “shovel-readiness”, and phased release of units outside Tier 1 and internal process for reallocation to fully expend funds and balance market absorption.

Ms. Mitchell stated that if the Committee is interested in moving forward the timeline is as follows:

- February 18, 2015 – Development Committee consideration
- February 2015 – Review with development community stakeholders
- March 12, 2015 – Full City Council consideration
- March 13, 2015 – Builder orientation
- April 1, 2015 – Applications due to City

- Spring 2015 – Development Agreements for funded projects to City Council
- Ongoing process for reallocation as needed.

The deadline for using the funding is September 30, but there may be a little flexibility in that it could extend until the end of the year.

Council member Vernon stated that she would like to see the process encourage development in Tier 2 as a higher priority than development in Tier 3. There are places within Tier 2 that would be good spots. Ms. Mitchell stated that, in the second round, Council had weighted scoring that emphasized highest priority for lots in Tier 1, second priority to lots in Tier 2, and the lowest priority to lots in Tier 3. That is something that could be implemented in this round of funding as well. Council member Vernon and Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director, both agree that would be a good process. Ms. Pratt stated that “shovel-readiness” is going to be critical in getting the funds spent.

Council member Vernon said that there are places where homes were lost in Tier 2 that were not in the core area that were not affected by the floods, but could help with other goals such as housing and keeping neighborhood schools open. Council member Vernon trusts that staff will do a great job and updates along the way would be appreciated.

Council member Weinacht is very interested in making sure that a lot of stability is given to the core neighborhood and would agree to moving on to Tier 2 next.

Council members Vernon and Weinacht agree to move forward with unanimous consent.

Informational Items:

1. Ellis and Kingston Overlay District Update

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated that on the City Council February 24th agenda there will be recommendations from the Mayor for the appointment of the Board of the Ellis and Kingston Overlay Districts. In March, they will have orientation and will review any development projects in either Overlay District that comes forward for approval slated for the City Planning Commission. The composition of the committee is to combine the membership for an architect, a developer, and an engineer as this reduces the number of people who have to serve on the committee with the thought being that those people can comment on all the projects for almost anywhere in the community. There are still two neighborhood representatives on each committee as well.

Council member Weinacht asked if the neighborhood representatives in Kingston or Ellis were from different areas within the neighborhood. Ms. Pratt stated that it was done by application and a lot of people were encouraged to apply to make sure we mixed them up as much as possible to balance the residential with business and property owner business.

2. Beekeeper Ordinance

Mr. Gunnerson stated that staff has been doing research into what other communities do as far as allowing beekeeping in the city limits. Currently, within Cedar Rapids, it is permitted within the A, Agriculture Zone District which is typically the fringe areas of town. It also can be done by conditional use in a couple of residential districts: R-T, R-1, and R-2. When the Urban Agriculture update was done, beekeeping was not allowed with the idea being that Urban Agriculture was just community garden space. A survey was done in various communities in Iowa and around the Midwest and a model beekeeping ordinance was found. The standards for

beekeeping involve setback requirements, access to water, notification of neighbors, number of hives, and an annual permit requirement. When EnvisionCR was adopted, initiative number 8 was for staff to update the Urban Agriculture Standards to include beekeeping. Staff recommendation is to wrap this into the Zoning Code update which is scheduled to begin later this year.

Council member Vernon asked about the dangers of beekeeping. Mr. Gunnerson stated that the number one concern is people getting stung especially if they are allergic. Council member Vernon asked about statistics and Mr. Gunnerson stated that research will need to be done.

Council member Weinacht asked if staff has talked to Parks and Recreation because she has talked to Daniel Gibbins about this topic and what the beehives would look like if they were put in parks. Council member Weinacht asked what kind of bees are being looked at. Mr. Gunnerson is assuming it would be a type of honey bee. Council member Vernon wanted to note that local honey is a great way to help with allergies and is in favor of going forward with this. Council member Weinacht is in favor of going forward also as long as public safety is being researched. Council member Vernon wants to continue to be careful of any chemicals that could be used in the beekeeping process.

3. 3rd Street Enhancement Update

Mr. Gunnerson stated that staff is trying to put together a report that will identify future improvements along the corridor. Third Street is something that has been talked about many times with it being a signature street in the community connecting Downtown to NewBo and the Czech Village. The importance of 3rd Street is connected to many plans such as the Downtown Plan and the Post Recovery Flood Plan. The Mayor went to the Mayor's Institute on City Design in 2014 and presented the 3rd Street Corridor as a design problem for the group. Staff has the results and a lot of it confirmed the direction of the planning so far with a couple other ideas. When EnvisionCR was adopted it identified the need for the City to develop a Corridor Action Plan along a number of corridors in the community with 3rd street being identified.

Mr. Gunnerson stated that the City's commitment to 3rd Street in the last couple years includes

- 2011 – Streetscape improvements between 8th and 16th Avenue
- 2013 – Road diet and addition of bike lanes
- 2013 – Parklet pilot program
- 2014 – Green bike lanes
- Ongoing – City participation in numerous redevelopment projects

Mr. Gunnerson stated that there are three sections staff is looking at for the Action Plan Report: infrastructure improvements, sidewalk toolkits (a booklet that can be distributed to businesses to come up with creative ways to use the sidewalks), and events to help unify the corridor. For each section, staff will look at identifying projects, estimated costs, and leads such as business owners to help carry the projects forward.

Council member Vernon would like the lighting on 3rd Avenue to be finished from 5th Street to 8th Street and for banners to be hung up to unify the area. The little white lights all year around would be a great addition.

Council member Weinacht likes the idea of the sidewalk toolkits. Ms. Pratt stated that the idea is to let the businesses be creative with what they want but understand a simple set of requirements to ensure safety. Having it be competitive with other businesses would create some excitement. Council Member Vernon likes the idea of having a contest and letting the businesses be creative.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kroll, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development