



**City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, April 15, 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; Caleb Mason, Redevelopment Analyst; Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner; and Anne Kroll, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council members Weinacht and Vernon approved the minutes from February 18, 2015 with unanimous consent.

Recommendation Items:

1. MedQuarter Overlay Design

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated that this is an ordinance which would create an overlay district for the MedQuarter SSMID. A draft ordinance was reviewed by the City Planning Commission on Thursday April 9, 2015 and unanimously recommended to the City Council for approval. The ordinance would do four things:

1. Establish boundaries for the new Overlay District, which would match the MedQuarter SSMID.
2. Amend the Czech Bohemia Overlay District to move one square block that is within the MedQuarter SSMID. This change has been previewed with the Czech Bohemia DRTAC.
3. Adopt design standards for the new district
4. Adopt a design manual which will include the design standards and additional recommendations.

As part of the draft standards there are design recommendations added to this. Mr. Gunnerson displayed the boundaries of the proposed district. The Overlay Districts modify the underlying zoning to allow for uniform building design and higher standards of development. The existing Design Review Overlay Districts are Czech Bohemia, Kingston Village, and Ellis Boulevard Area. This applies to all development except single or two-family homes. The requirements for site and building design in the ordinance have five sections:

- Building Massing, Orientation and Site Design
- Building Design
- Site Furnishings and Landscaping
- Signage
- Greenway Design Standards.

Design recommendations would include recommended elements that should be considered and not to incorporate into ordinance language, but to include in the Design Manual to provide additional information to developers. Some highlights for the recommendation are transition zones which lower maximum building height with an emphasis on retaining neighborhood character, Greenway Streets which are defined build-to line for buildings with requirements for pedestrian amenities between building and sidewalk, and façade-specific design requirements. Mr. Gunnerson discussed actions to date and next steps.

Council member Weinacht asked how large this district is compared to the other three and if there was a policy of how large they can be or if it is on an individual basis. Mr. Gunnerson stated that they have been handled individually. This one is roughly the same size as Czech Bohemia and Kingston Village.

Council member Weinacht asked if there have been conversations with the adjacent neighborhoods. Mr. Gunnerson stated that the Neighborhood Associations were informed of the open house and he has not heard any feedback from them or negative comments. Council member Weinacht would like there to be discussion and follow-up with those neighborhoods.

Council member Vernon asked why there is a limit of two stories. Mr. Gunnerson stated that the infill will match the existing and the height would be what the zoning district states. When Jeff Speck spoke last month he stated that developers often hold out for the 20 story buildings instead of the lower level buildings. In a lot of areas infill is encouraged to be in a 3-5 story range.

Council member Vernon asked about design. Mr. Gunnerson stated that there are plans to look at streetscaping from the sidewalk to the street. Property owners would be encouraged to coordinate that from the property line into the building face.

Council member Vernon asked if there was concern about the two-way street conversions. Mr. Gunnerson stated that in discussions with the MedQuarter, they are very eager to see that happen especially on 4th Avenue.

Council members Vernon and Weinacht agreed to move this forward with unanimous consent as long as there is follow up with the adjacent neighborhoods.

2. 629 12th Avenue SE

Mr. Gunnerson stated that the City received a letter requesting disposal of property located adjacent to 629 12th Avenue SE. The request is to develop the property for parking for the restaurants at 624 and 629 12th Avenue SE. They are not technically required to provide parking. The amount of parking provided in their proposed site plan falls below the maximum parking for the area. That would be one of the criteria moving forward. The standard process is that the Development Committee review requests and evaluation criteria and then a recommendation on competitive proposal process to City Council. The requested parcel was acquired by the City after the flood and is currently vacant. Any other interest has not been received. The developer has reached out to the Oakhill Jackson Neighborhood Association and did receive positive feedback.

Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director, stated the developer presented at an Oakhill Jackson Neighborhood Association meeting and was very well received. The neighborhood feels that it would really help both of the restaurants to have parking and would alleviate parking in the neighborhood. This developer has also met with the principal of Metro High School and

received good feedback. The neighborhood did note that there needs to be lighting. The lighting should improve the safety in the area. There are no residential structures next to it.

Council member Vernon agrees with the lighting and it should be in keeping with the neighborhood. When there is a slab of parking, what is the best practice for that? There should be a way to edge it and make it look nice without being dangerous. This property borders Poet's Park. Mr. Gunnerson stated that part of the criteria will be the standard criteria of the City and they would have to meet the zoning requirements. As part of the proposal they will have to show that they meet all the requirements. Mr. Gunnerson displayed a timeline for moving forward.

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

3. 1216 2nd Street SE Disposition

Caleb Mason, Redevelopment Analyst, stated that 1216 2nd Street SE is a property that was brought to the Development Committee for consideration to move through a disposition process. The Development Committee declined moving forward with the disposition process based on the property's location in a key district, and ensuring that development is the highest and best use of the property. Discussions have continued with the property owner and tenants and their interest is for short term use of the property through ground lease for storage of their trash receptacle and urban gardening as part of their restaurant venture. Mr. Mason displayed a map of the property and surrounding area. Staff recommends the City consider a short term lease of the property where the owner, or its tenant, would be given use of the site for a defined period of time and be allowed to make improvements at their expense. In similar cases the City has provided a three year lease term with optional extensions. This arrangement preserves the long term use of the property if a developer would propose a master plan with adjacent property, but also provides a temporary use of the site to meet the needs of the business owner. If the Development Committee is in favor of moving forward then a resolution directing staff to pursue a lease would be on the City Council agenda as early as April 28, 2015.

Council member Vernon asked if the lease states that this is a short term situation because the vision of City Council is that the highest and best use would be to develop it. Mr. Mason stated that the lease provides a preamble which, similar to a City Council resolution, provides the basis for the terms outlined in the lease.

Council member Weinacht asked if there was an opportunity for people who own a home and have property adjacent to vacant City-owned property, to lease the property for uses such as an urban garden. Ms. Pratt stated that, until the ROOTs program is done, City staff's priority to vacant buildable lots which are outside the 100-year floodplain have been targeted for the program. For the lot in question, it is located in the 100-year flood plain, so it is not available for the ROOTs program. In cases where the lot does not meet minimum requirement to be a buildable lot, staff has initiated a process to request offers from adjacent property owners. In key development areas such as NewBo, the lot could be leveraged as part of a bigger development and we want to be able to partner in with developers when those opportunities arise.

Council members Vernon and Weinacht agreed to move this forward with unanimous consent and agreed that these commercial properties will be considered one at a time and will be specified to the situation.

4. Alliant Substation

Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager, stated that this is a request for City owned property that was received in September 2014 by Alliant Energy. The properties

requested are located on the northwest side. The request is for land to support the development of a substation that is needed for existing needs and projected future growth. These properties were acquired with CDBG through the Voluntary Acquisition Program. They are located primarily in the 100-year flood plain, so they would carry deed restrictions for CDBG use as well as the 100-year flood plain. Ms. Mitchell displayed a map of the property requested which are on 4th Street SW and H Avenue. There are considerations in evaluating the request. First, there is close proximity to a transmission line tap source. There is a need to satisfy the CDGB deed restrictions and that can be done through a proposed land swap. Alliant controls the property off of Glass Road that the City has been contemplating for a water tower project and as long as the land meets a public purpose in both instances and is of equal or greater value to the City, then those deed restrictions could transfer. In order to satisfy the restrictions for the 100-year flood plain, Alliant indicates that they can elevate the substation above the 100-year flood plain level. They would have to have a flood mitigation risk plan. Alliant could temporarily suspend service there in an event of a flood and could temporarily transfer the service to other facilities. The last consideration is the aesthetics and design. Staff is recommending that any Development Agreement address neighborhood aesthetics and consultation with the neighborhood stakeholders. Ms. Mitchell displayed the timeline and next steps.

Council member Weinacht asked when Alliant proposes to build the substation. Ms. Mitchell stated that there still is a lot of work to be done, so probably not before 2020.

Council member Vernon asked about the height of the substation. Ms. Mitchell stated that this substation will be similar in size to the new Buffalo substation recently developed on the northeast side on Edgewood Road. Council member Vernon asked why they needed so much land. Ms. Mitchell stated that Alliant plans to do some buffering, but also to have the ability to add capacity in the future.

Council member Vernon asked about the flood protection. Ms. Pratt stated that whole area is at least part of either the rise of the levee or potentially some of the infrastructure.

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

Informational Items:

1. ROOTs Update

Ms. Mitchell stated that on March 11, 2015 there was a Builder Orientation to solicit applications which were due April 1, 2015. The applications were recently evaluated by staff and a member of the neighborhood association near where these homes are being built. Based on that allocation, an additional 54 units have been added and that brings the total to 198 for Round 4. Of those, 108 units are in Tier 1, 1 unit in Tier 2, and 89 units are in Tier 3. There are 70 that are currently under Development Agreement and those are units that were allocated before this last round. There are 62 that are presold. Staff keeps track of the value that is being added by the program. The first 182 properties that were built and sold through the program have been assessed. In 2008, before the flood, those properties were collectively valued at over \$13 million. After the flood, the values decreased significantly, but with the new homes constructed and sold the value is over \$24 million today. This trend is projected to carry through the program. The deadline has been extended to the end of the year from September 30, 2015.

2. Update on the Historic Preservation Plan

Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner, stated that in August 2011, the City entered the MOA with various parties due to demolition of historic properties from the 2008 flood. The

MOA includes 8 mitigation measures including preparation of the City's first Historic Preservation Plan. Not many places have a standalone Preservation Plan so this is very unique to the community. Outreach has been done via focus groups, a public workshop, and a task force including representatives from City Council, City Planning Commission, and Historic Preservation Commission. The draft plan framework is laid out in three parts: Preservation in Cedar Rapids, Preservation Background, and The City's Cultural Resources. Mr. Hintz displayed some examples from the Plan.

Jeff Hintz stated that there are five different components: Administration, Identification, Management Tools, Incentives & Benefits, and Education. Overarching Initiatives do not fit into a specific component, but are important. One is to incorporate historic preservation into Neighborhood Action Plans and Corridor Action Plans, planning study areas, and other City planning projects. The other is to explore creating a program that coordinates Public Works and Community Development staff on infrastructure projects within historic districts. Another component is Management Tools and some of those initiatives are to update Chapter 18 Historic Preservation of the Municipal Code, update the Guidelines for Cedar Rapids Historic Districts, and update Chapter 32 Zoning of the Municipal Code to better support preservation and consideration of neighborhood character. More initiatives are to consider developing a Neighborhood Conservation District program for neighborhood that may not be eligible for historic district designation, develop an endangered property WATCH list, and explore the development of an emergency preservation fund. One Incentives & Benefits initiative is to explore the establishment of grant and loan programs for owners of historic resources. One initiative for Education is to develop a formal Heritage Tourism Program. Mr. Hintz displayed the timeline.

Council member Weinacht asked what an endangered property WATCH list is and how it works. Ms. Pratt stated that this list is just identifying properties that are at risk. Maybe there is deferred maintenance and there is some concern. This is one role that HPC as well as Save CR can do is doing outreach and being proactive to make sure that the owner is aware of historic tax credits or other funding mechanisms.

Council member Weinacht asked about grants and if the City would consider that. Ms. Pratt stated that it has been done in different ways in different communities. The City already has used historic preservation as criteria for the standard Economic Development Program. It has been done for the commercial mixed use large project to make sure incentives are provided. In some communities the smaller residential properties have received some funding and have worked with banks to get loan guarantees.

Council member Weinacht asked about funding. Ms. Pratt stated that there is no money attached to this. Council member Vernon stated that once this goes through the process and is approved by Council the City is shovel ready with this plan. It is not in the funding step, but the framework will be done.

Informational Items:

Craig McCormick would like to be added to the agenda as soon as possible to acquire City lots on 2nd Street. Council member Vernon asked Mr. McCormick to submit his request in writing to Ms. Pratt.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kroll, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development