



City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, September 23, 2015
4:00 p.m.

The meeting was brought to order at 4:02 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair), Shey, and Weinacht. Staff members present: Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director; Bill Micheel, Community Development Assistant Director; Jennifer Barten, Homeownership Program Coordinator; and Anne Kroll, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Shey motioned to approve the minutes from July 15, 2015. Council member Weinacht seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations:

1. Food Environment Work

Stephanie Neff, Blues Zones Project Community Program Manager, stated that healthy food environment includes community policy, built environments, restaurants, grocery stores, and schools. There are many people in the community that are working hard at those efforts. Ms. Neff shared a summary of food environment efforts in Cedar Rapids that support increase access, visibility and learning opportunities. Ms. Neff shared successes during the Blue Zones Project operating period, the Cedar Rapids area Food Environment Alliance (FAE) partner organizations, and FAE partner success stories. Some of the next steps are:

- Continue to build on assets
- Target underserved populations, paying particular attention to the relationship between culture and food
- Explore policies that support sustainable environmental changes and strengthen pillars (access, visibility, learning opportunities)
- Integrate agricultural urbanism community design principles
- Link work of FEA and Linn County Food Systems Council (BOS Appointed)

Ms. Neff discussed zoning for healthy food policy. A Model Healthy Food Ordinance, developed by National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN) prohibits new fast food restaurants from locating within a certain distance from any school or other designated location. There could be zoning to limit density and location of fast food establishments which would restrict fast food near public schools and playgrounds and/or limit density.

Ms. Neff provided a summary of the presentation:

- Food system efforts are influenced by and have impact on well-being, quality of life and economics
- Current trends show that, at best, we have managed to slow down the negative trajectory
- All sectors have a role in the food environment
- Council can support and influence policy to help make healthy food choices easier
- All community design should consider agricultural urbanism tactics
- Sustainability built environmental changes are key; partnerships are essential

Council member Shey asked Ms. Neff if there is a specific ask of the City Council. Ms. Neff stated that there are a lot of opportunities and forward movement and it can look many different ways. It is about what is the best way for groups to be able to identify and bring things to the City Council and the City Council helping to facilitate that relationship.

Council member Shey stated that this is focused on supply and distribution, but the issue is the demand. How do you change the dynamic of what kids eat and create the demand for fruits and vegetables? Ann Torbert, 4-H Youth Development Specialist for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, stated that there is a lot of education that can be done with kids, but funding is the problem. Ms. Neff stated that it is a culture change that will happen over time. If every time a child goes to school or the food pantry and there are food tastings there the child will start to like healthy foods. Food system is the most challenging issue to address because it hits everyone. It has been done with tobacco.

Council member Weinacht stated that perhaps what is needed is land use policy to establish more urban gardens around schools that can offset the fast foods in the area. Ms. Neff stated that is coming and there are pockets of that land that can work for that. Council Member Weinacht asked about marketing and what to do with the gardens in the winter months. Ms. Neff stated that with shared use kitchens the food can still be present in the winter months. Also, signage around the gardens will be helpful.

Council member Vernon likes the idea of edible gardens and asked if any other parks in Cedar Rapids, besides Knoll Ridge Park, are planning to do that. Nate Pruett of Iowa BIG stated that urban farming has been discussed with the redesign of Bever Park, but not at any other of the parks.

Council member Vernon stated to keep in mind pesticides and the safety of the community when working with updating the zoning code.

Recommendation Items:

1. Fiscal Year 2016 CDBG and HOME Priorities

Jennifer Barten, Homeownership Program Coordinator, shared some background of CDBG and HOME annual priorities.

- September 2012 - annual process adopted to establish priorities for CDBG & HOME funds.
- Effort to target the increasing limited entitlement resources.
 - CDBG has decreased by 25% and HOME by 36% since 2010.
- HOME funds have an additional requirement to set-aside a minimum of 15 % for Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs).

Ms. Barten shared the following recommendations:

- Recommendations are based off of FY2015 final allocation amounts as FY2016 numbers will not be available until the spring of 2016.
- CDBG priority recommendations follow in the chart on the next slide.
- It is recommended that \$75,000 of the budgeted \$270,425 in HOME funds be used for eligible CHDO activities.

Ms. Barten shared a chart of CDBG percentage recommendations and the following additional recommendations:

- Up to \$50,000 Neighborhood Certification Program set-aside from “public service” and/or “other community needs” category for activities carried out by CDBG-eligible certified neighborhoods.
- Activities must be CDBG-eligible and consistent with neighborhood work plan.
- Creates more predictable, uniform, streamlined application process for neighborhoods.

Ms. Barten shared the next steps.

Council member Weinacht asked if the neighborhood associations have seen the chart of CDBG percentage recommendations. Ms. Barten stated that they have and there have been no objections. Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director, stated that the breakdown in the chart is dictated by the statutory limits.

Council member Vernon asked when there are cuts in funding how is that made up. Ms. Barten stated that there is a percentage decrease to all of the people who have applied. Smaller projects are being funded instead of larger projects.

Council member Shey motioned to approve recommending to City Council to approve the fiscal year 2016 CDBG and HOME annual priorities. Council member Weinacht seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Informational Items:

1. Upcoming Project Updates

Bill Micheel, Community Development Assistant Director, stated that corridor action plans focus on corridors that provide key linkages and connections throughout the city and neighborhood action plans identify issues and opportunities specific to individual neighborhoods. Mr. Micheel provided information on three projects from the Community Development work plan.

Collins Road Corridor Action Plan

- Project Focus
 - Streetscaping, access management, gateway.
- Timeline
 - August 2015 – December 2016
- Lead Staff Person
 - Adam Lindenlaub and Kirsty Sanchez
 - Coordinated effort with Public Works.

Mt. Vernon Road Corridor Action Plan

- Project Focus:
 - Streetscaping.

- Lighting, plants, landscaping, multi-modal transportation
 - Catalyst Sites
 - Redevelopment opportunities, assemble properties
 - Policy Areas
 - Design guidelines, setbacks, signage, access
 - Key intersections
 - Design, streetscape elements
- Timeline
 - October 2015 – October 2016
- Staff members:
 - Adam Lindenlaub and Kirsty Sanchez

Northwest Neighborhood Action Plan

- Project Focus
 - Consensus based vision for the future.
 - Plan will help guide physical change, decision making, and policy in the area over the next 10 to 15 years.
- Timeline
 - October 2015 – October 2016
- Lead Staff Person
 - Kirsty Sanchez and Seth Gunnerson

Council member Shey shared concerns about Mt. Vernon Road and how businesses there cater to through traffic rather than the neighborhood itself. There were individuals who made investments elsewhere that helped those neighborhoods propel. Mt. Vernon Road needs people to invest their own money. Mr. Micheel stated that that will be part of the process. The areas that are seeing change had strategies that the City implemented to help get there. As an example, parcels can be assembled to provide opportunity for development and the City can invest some money in the pedestrian elements. Council member Vernon stated that there needs to be design standards to bring charm back to Mt. Vernon Road.

Council member Weinacht shared concerns about the northeast quadrant of town. Mr. Micheel stated that area has been identified as an issue and there are similar issues to what is happening on Mt. Vernon Road. There are not a lot of answers at this point, but it has been identified that there is a need to define the character there. Ms. Pratt stated that in EnvisionCR there is a type of plan called an area plan. Staff can create an area plan for the northeast quadrant that would address the character issues.

Council members Weinacht, Shey, and Vernon unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kroll, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development