



**City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, October 21, 2015
4:00 p.m.**

The meeting was brought to order at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Council members Shey and Weinacht. Staff members present: Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Brandon Whyte, Corridor MPO Multimodal Transportation Planner; Ron Griffith, Traffic Project Engineer; Matt Myers, Traffic Engineering Manager; Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager; and Anne Kroll, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Weinacht motioned to approve the minutes from September 23, 2015. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations:

1. 3rd Avenue Street Conversion and Bike Lanes

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, gave an overview of the 2nd and 3rd Avenue road conversions.

- Two-Way Conversion and Road Diet
 - Remove unnecessary travel lanes (based on traffic volume)
 - Allow traffic in both directions
- Protected Bike Lanes
 - Dedicated and protected bicycle facility on 3rd Avenue
- Narrower Intersection Width
 - Reduced walking distance to a manageable 22-24 feet (as opposed to 50 to 60 feet).
- Refuge areas (painted and/or physical barriers such as planters)
 - Increased visibility of pedestrians
 - Reduced crossing distance
 - Decreased vehicle speeds

Mr. Gunnerson gave a timeline of City Council actions:

- June 10, 2014 – Development Agreement with CRST
 - Conversion of 2nd and 3rd Avenue Bridge in 2015
- January 27, 2015 – 5-year vision for two-way conversions
- April 14, 2015 – 2nd and 3rd Avenue Design Contract (HR Green)
- May 26, 2015 – City Council approves plans and specifications
- June 15, 2015 – Price Industrial awarded contract to complete work

- September 8 , 2015 – Various resolutions adopting new traffic control regulations on 2nd and 3rd Avenue

Mr. Gunnerson discussed outreach that was done with open houses, farmer’s markets, presentations, and demonstrations. Matt Myers, Traffic Engineering Manager, stated that a radio interview is set for next week. Ron Griffith, Traffic Project Engineer, stated that there has also been a lot of coverage from KCRG and the Gazette. Brandon Whyte, MPO Multimodal Transportation Planner, stated that The Des Moines Register wrote a piece on comparing Des Moines and Cedar Rapids and what Des Moines could learn from Cedar Rapids.

Mr. Gunnerson stated that work on the street conversions began the week of September 7, 2015 on 2nd Avenue and traffic was converted to two-way on 2nd and 3rd Avenues by the week of September 21, 2015. Protected bike lanes were added, planters were placed at no parking and pedestrian areas to help direct traffic and keep cars in the right spots, and green boxes were painted for bicyclists making left turns.

Mr. Gunnerson shared what is left to do with this project.

- 2nd Avenue South
 - Durable Markings on Bridge to delineate pedestrian refuge areas.
- 3rd Avenue South
 - 2016 project to resurface street
 - Durable markings and pedestrian improvements
- 1st Street SW Traffic Signals

Mr. Gunnerson stated that there are still issues with parking on the 3rd Avenue Bridge over the bike lanes. Outreach is being done to help educate citizens on the conversion and bike lanes such as bike lane demos, public events, courtesy notices, and business visits. City staff is monitoring and observing traffic patterns. To help with parking over bike lanes on the 3rd Avenue Bridge, flexible delineators will be installed. Mr. Myers stated that the delineators are flexible and will not damage a vehicle. Mr. Gunnerson shared pictures of the redesigned streets.

Council member Weinacht asked what the cost of the conversion was and if it was within budget. Mr. Myers stated that the current project (2nd and 3rd Avenues) costs just under \$1 million and it is within the budget. That includes the markings, the parking structure redesign, removing five signals, sign adjustments, and some rebuilding of streets. Mr. Griffith stated that 4th Avenue costs \$1.9 million and that includes rebuilding the street and utility work.

Council member Weinacht asked which intersections will have stop lights reactivated. Mr. Myers stated that there are two signals that are flashing red which will be reactivated and the rest of the intersections will remain two and four way stops.

Council member Weinacht stated that she is hearing people ask why the City is not taxing bicycles. Mr. Griffith stated that most bicyclist own a car or home and are paying taxes. Look at the damage that a vehicle does to the roadway and the amount of room that you need for a car compared to the damage a bicycle does and how little room is needed. Mr. Whyte stated that if we can see a modest change from ½% for road share (commuter trips) up to 4-5% of cars not on that road anymore causing that damage and increased up keep that would make the roads more sustainable.

Council member Shey stated that he is thrilled with the conversions because the whole idea is to slow down the traffic and make downtown a more inviting place. Do you expect traffic patterns

to change so that there is more local traffic on 2nd – 5th Avenues coming to downtown as a destination instead of passing through? Mr. Myers stated that he would agree with that and the streets will have more equal volume as people get used to the conversions.

Council member Shey stated that the goal here is complete streets which are streets that can accommodate vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Council member Shey asked if the bicycle lanes being used are standard design practices. Mr. Whyte stated that they are and there are a lot nationally, but this is the first in Iowa.

Council member Weinacht asked about the safety of four way/two way stops versus stop lights in the winter since everyone has to stop at the signs. Mr. Myers stated that he will speak with Mike Duffy (Streets Superintendent) about keeping bicycle lanes clear in the winter. There should be a level of service that is expected and it is not so much the stop signs, but road surface. Mr. Duffy probably has a plan as to what the road condition should be during a snow event. There are policies for chemical treatments as well as how many people to have on a shift and what equipment is needed.

Recommendation Items:

1. 12th Avenue and Otis Road SE Intersection Review

Mr. Myers stated that the intersection at 12th Avenue and Otis Road was counted and it does not meet the volume warranted to put in a four way stop. The Depot development is underway nearby and Mr. Myers needs to speak with Development Services about how future traffic will look like. The crash history of this intersection does not warrant a four way stop. There are a lot of things that are going to be built in the area in the future and may increase traffic volumes. Mr. Myers would also like to reach out to Metro High School to get their feedback. Mr. Myers is not recommending a four way stop now, but will speak with Development Services and Metro High School and will return to a future meeting to share that feedback.

Council member Weinacht asked if pedestrians and bicyclist were taken into consideration at this intersection and not just vehicle traffic since there is a school and park nearby. Mr. Myers stated that pedestrians and bikes are part of the traffic count. The school intersection was not taken into account, but it would be a good idea to count and review that intersection as well. Mr. Griffith stated that Paving for Progress has a project in the area that includes adding bicycle lanes. That may impact future traffic as well.

Council member Weinacht motioned to approve moving forward without a four way stop until Mr. Myers has spoken with Development Services and Metro High School. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Informational Items:

1. Low Income Housing Tax Credit Projects

Paula Mitchell, Housing and Redevelopment Manager, stated that this is a preview of projects for proposed Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) applications which are due to the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) in December. This will come back to Development Committee in November for recommendation. The City received three (3) new requests of support for LIHTC projects which includes two (2) workforce housing proposals and one (1) senior housing proposal. If funded, the proposals would create 152 new units. Options for Local Government Contribution include land, Urban Revitalization Tax Exemption, and Tax Increment Financing.

Ms. Mitchell reviewed the three projects and shared maps of their locations. Ms. Mitchell shared the next steps:

- October/November – Staff will review financial requests to identify options for City participation.
- November 18 – Staff will bring back recommendations to Development Committee.
- December 1 – City Council consideration of City participation.
- December 7 – LIHTC applications due to IFA.

Ms. Mitchell stated that staff will receive an updated draft of the Housing Market Analysis later this week. The market analyst will weigh in on the market need for these housing types in these locations. Staff will work with the Assessor to identify the potential value of City contribution.

Council member Shey asked if the market analysis is part of the justification for these projects. Ms. Mitchell stated that, yes, it is and in previous years other projects that were approved were consistent with the market analysis for the City.

Council member Weinacht asked for a definition of workforce housing. Ms. Mitchell stated that, generally, it is housing along a continuum that provides affordable housing for the bulk of the workforce. People who are employed and can afford to pay rent with or without a subsidies program.

Jennifer Pratt, Director Community Development and Planning, stated that this is the competitive LIHTC round and they are looking at a 9% tax credit. There is also a noncompetitive round and that is an easier application process, but only 4% of the tax credit is provided. Those applications are due in March.

Council member Shey asked how many projects there were last year. Ms. Mitchell stated projects were funded two years ago. Seven projects were submitted and only two received funding. Last year there were three projects, but based on the details of the projects not coming together the way they hoped, none of them moved forward. It does vary year to year along with IFA's application form. Council member Shey asked if the five projects from two years ago that did not get funding moved forward. Ms. Mitchell stated that one of the projects previewed today is a repeat attempt. There have been cases where a project is not successful in one type of application, but it may come back for another funding program. A lot of times, though, projects like this without some type of assistance do not get done.

Council member Weinacht motioned to adjourn the meeting. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kroll, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development