



**City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Training Room
Wednesday, January 20, 2016
3:00 p.m.**

The meeting was brought to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Council members Poe (Chair), Shey, and Overland. Staff members present: Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Director; Caleb Mason, Economic Development Analyst; Bill Micheel, Community Development Assistant Director; Anne Russett, Community Development Planner; and Anne Kroll, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Shey made a motion to approve the minutes from December 16, 2015. Council member Overland seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Recommendation Items:

1. Request for Proposals – 1st St & 3rd Ave SE

Caleb Mason, Economic Development Analyst, stated that the City received a letter of request for the three properties at 101 3rd Avenue SE. One parcel was acquired from the Economic Alliance and as part of that agreement the City agreed to allow them review of the redevelopment. The other two parcels were acquired with Federal dollars and are subject to the Federal requirements to sell at Fair Market Value (proceeds returned to program) and flood mitigation measures. There is an existing parking lease that expires in September 2016 and if this property is sold prior to that date it is subject to payback of prorated improvement cost. Mr. Mason shared the following RFP Development Objectives:

1. Financially viable redevelopment based on current market conditions
2. Use of entire site for building footprint
3. Multi-story design of no less than 5-stories
4. Urban design that enhances the character of the neighborhood
5. Pedestrian level must be inviting with commercial or retail space and/or architectural treatments
6. Coordination of parking needs with area property owners
7. Preference for projects that incorporate market rate housing options consistent with the Maxfield Housing Market Analysis

Mr. Mason reviewed the following evaluation criteria:

1. Developer Capacity and Project Feasibility
 - Capacity, experience, and capability of the Developer
 - Market Feasibility
 - Financial feasibility
 - Timeline for redevelopment and built-out
2. Community Benefit

- Quality of architecture
 - Innovative sustainability features building design
 - Inclusion of market rate housing options
3. Economic impact
- Overall project investment
 - Jobs created or retained
 - Amenities or services provided

Mr. Mason provided a proposed timeline with the project design coming back to the Development Committee in May for a recommendation.

Council member Overland stated that this is the last chance to build in this core area since everything else around it has been developed and he is excited to see what the new building will look like.

Council member Shey is glad to see that there has to be a building here and that this property will not be used just for parking. Council member Shey asked what the rules are for building in the 100 year floodplain. Mr. Mason stated that there needs to be mitigation one foot above the floodplain and there are a number of ways to do that such as wet flood proofing or bringing the first floor up. Council member Shey asked if all building permits issued in the 100 year floodplain have to abide by these rules. Mr. Mason stated that if the building is historic there are certain exemptions.

Council member Poe asked how many parking spaces are currently in this lot. Doug Neumann, Economic Alliance, stated that there are seventy (70) parking spaces.

Council member Poe would like to see the people that review the proposals pay attention to the design because of the location. This building needs to stand out and be a showcase and it needs to fit in so well within the community that you cannot tell that it is brand new.

Council member Overland made a motion to recommend that City Council approve inviting redevelopment proposals for the property at 101 3rd Avenue SE. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Informational Items:

1. Changes to the Built Environment

Bill Micheel, Community Development Assistant Director, shared the following list of programs creating changes to the built environment:

- Paving for Progress
- Complete Streets Policy
- Sidewalk Installation Policy
- Two-way Street Conversions
- Existing and Zoning Code Update
- Sidewalk Master Plan
- Design Review Overlay Districts

Mr. Micheel shared the common goals and objectives:

Improve health, livability, and economic vitality of the community by:

- Increasing walkability and connectivity

- Accommodating all modes of transportation
- Improving safety of public right-of-ways
- Improving community aesthetics

Mr. Micheel stated that public input opportunities were available recently at the Farmer’s Market and at the Public Works Open House where individuals could vote on which issues were the most important to them. At both events, bike and pedestrian accessibility had the most votes.

Mr. Micheel stated that bringing in experts affirms things that the City is already working on and brings in new ideas. Dan Burden presented on the idea of a life radius. Ninety (90) percent of the things an individual’s life is in their life radius. The ideal life radius is five (5) miles since there are benefits to reducing the size of an individual’s life radius.

Mr. Micheel stated that our streets provide two primary services: moving goods and services and living. Paving for Progress puts a focus on the condition of the public right-of-way and moving these vehicles and goods. The Complete Streets Policy combined with the Sidewalk Installation Policy and Master Plan insures that living is taken care of. Our streets are some of the largest amount of public spaces and where city life is played out.

Anne Russett, Community Development Planner, stated that the Two-Way Street Conversions Project make the streets more accessible to navigate, supports all users of the transportation system (pedestrians, bikers, drivers), increases business visibility, and slows traffic. Historically, these streets were two-way streets.

Ms. Russett stated that Community Development has been working on the Zoning Code for years and shared some of the ways the department addressed issues related to walkability through zoning since 2012:

- *Commercial & Multifamily Design Standards*: Addresses pedestrian accessibility
- *Design Review Overlay Districts*: Helps to ensure development continues to promote the walkable nature of these older neighborhoods
- *Interim Zoning Code Amendments*: Promotes pedestrian friendly site design

Ms. Russett stated that a comprehensive update of the Zoning Code will start soon and as part of that a form-based code will be explored. A form-based code:

- Focuses on the built environment and its relationship to the public realm
- Promotes the integration of open space, residential, and commercial land uses
- Helps to create an environment that encourages walking

Ms. Russett stated that the following will be looked at as part of the Zoning Code update:

- Streetscape / Public ROW Standards:
 - Landscaping and street trees
 - Pedestrian scale street lighting
 - Sidewalk widths
 - Street furniture
- Parking Standards:
 - On-street parking
 - Parking maximums
 - Parking buffers
 - Parking in rear
- Development Standards:
 - Pedestrian access

- Transparent facades

Ms. Russett noted that Ed McMahon, Senior Research Fellow, Urban Land Institute will present on the relationship between historic preservation and sustainability and the role each have in creating successful, living communities on February 4, 2016 at the Cedar Rapids Public Library. Jeff Pomeranz, City Manager, suggested that staff contact Johnson County cities, the other cities in Linn County, and other planners to let them know that Ed McMahon will be presenting.

Mr. Micheel introduced the following City staff to answer any questions about the presentation: Doug Wilson, Paving for Progress Manager; Matt Myers, Traffic Engineering Manager; Brandon Whyte, Corridor MPO Multimodal Transportation Planner; and Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner.

Council member Overland stated that he has received complaints about the two-way street conversion and how some people never go downtown because it is too confusing. Council member Overland tells them to wait until the project is completely done and it will make sense. A hard part of the transition is that it cannot be done all at once. Mr. Myers stated that it is a change and when complaints are received staff talks them through the process and answers their questions and concerns. Staff is trying to get things converted as quickly as possible and there are active discussions happening. Staff is tying in the two-way conversions with Paving for Progress projects where that is possible. Staff plans to talk to the affected neighborhoods in February to mid-March about the upcoming conversions. There is a public meeting on February 11, 2016 for the conversion and Paving for Progress project happening downtown. Mr. Micheel asked if there is a timeline for the completion of the two-way street conversion. Mr. Myers stated that staff is hoping to finish the eastern part of the conversion in 2016 and the core downtown connecting to 2nd and 3rd Avenues in 2017.

Council member Shey stated that with promoting sidewalks, walkability, and Blue Zones it is important to recognize that these sidewalks need to be cleared after it snows. There are challenges with the Snow Removal Ordinance and there needs to be a balance between enforcement and having city staff out there shoveling which is not the highest and best use of their time. Mr. Micheel stated that staff will find better ways to address that issue.

Council member Poe stated that having housing in Kingston Village and in the Ellis Commercial Corridor will cause more people to go out walking and enjoying the community.

Council member Poe stated that she likes that fact that staff is being proactive and getting on the radio and sharing information about these types of project. There were a lot of great remarks on the bike videos and there should be more of these with all the changes going on in the City to help people understand them.

Council member Poe would like to encourage shade trees rather than the shorter trees or small shrubbery. Mr. Whyte stated that part of the Complete Streets Policy is that he works closely with Todd Fagan, City Forester, and there is a section about trees and what should be looked at and documented on a Complete Streets checklist. Mr. Fagan reviews every project and has an inventory of trees. Mr. Wilson stated that Mr. Fagan is included on all reviews when starting a project. Generally, shade trees are put in unless there is a small space. The City tries to put in more trees than what is taken out. Mr. Gunnerson stated that the Zoning Ordinance has the requirement for there to be sidewalks installed with all new development as well as a street tree requirement.

Council member Poe asked for information that shows growth of small businesses in the core that shows progress and an increase in economic development. Doug Neumann of the Economic Alliance stated that the property tax base has increased steadily, occupancy of retail space has increased, and the number of jobs has increased steadily since 2008. This data can be hard to track.

Council member Overland stated that other cities put effort into building these small and unique areas like Czech Village. They are their own attraction and with our street improvements and bike lanes, we should figure out where those areas are now and what could they become. Mr. Micheel stated that those are the most exciting opportunities for new development and that people will want to live near those areas. Ms. Pratt stated that this has been identified in EnvisionCR and there are certain areas targeted such as Mt. Vernon Road and the College District/Irish District. The Mt. Vernon Road Study will be underway soon. Council member Overland thought that Highway 100 and Highway 30 might be good options as well.

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

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Kroll, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development