

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: December 8, 2022

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Council Chambers, City Building, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

PLAN COMMISSION

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Dustin Allred, Andrew Fell, Lew Hopkins, Debarah McFarland, Karen Simms, Chenxi Yu

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Will Andresen

STAFF PRESENT: UPTV Camera Operator; Sheila Dodd, Interim Community Development Services Director, Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner/Zoning Administrator; Marcus Ricci, Planner II; Nick Olsen, Planner I

PUBLIC PRESENT: Kenny Mosley, Paul and JoAnn Wagenbreth

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Allred called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Roll call was taken, and there was a quorum of the members present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

NOTE: Ms. Simms arrived at 7:04 p.m.

The minutes of the October 20, 2022 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Fell moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as written. Ms. Yu seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Olsen stated that staff did not receive any written communications. However, staff hosted a neighborhood meeting on December 1, 2022, and twelve residents attended. A summary of the meeting is included in the written staff report for Plan Case No. 2464-M-22.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2464-M-22 – A request by the City of Urbana to rezone 1603 East Washington Street from B-3, General Business to R-5, Medium High Density Multiple Family Residential.

Chair Allred opened the public hearing for Plan Case No. 2464-M-22. Nick Olsen, Planner I, presented the case to the Plan Commission. He began by explaining the purpose for the proposed rezoning and talked about the public outreach staff had done to inform the surrounding neighbors and business owners. He described the subject property and gave a brief history of the site. He noted the future land use designation of “multi-family” for the proposed site in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

He talked about a proposal that the City received from Northpointe Development to develop the site with mixed-income family housing. He explained that the proposal would require additional approval of the City Council due to the City’s financial interest in the property. He presented a potential timeline for the development process.

He reviewed how the proposed rezoning relates to the eight La Salle National Bank criteria. He read the options of the Plan Commission for this case and presented staff’s recommendation for approval.

Chair Allred asked if the Plan Commission members had any questions for City staff.

Mr. Fell asked why this case was before them now. Mr. Olsen responded saying that the subject property is currently vacant, and the City has received a development proposal for the lot. While staff is not certain that the development will happen, rezoning the lot now will make development go faster when/if it does get approved.

Mr. Fell wondered if City staff put out a Request for Proposal (RFP). Sheila Dodd, Interim Community Development Services Director, replied no. Because there was more than one developer that came forward on their own and because of the rapidly approaching tax credit deadline, the City did not send out an RFP. Mr. Fell asked if the property is rezoned, does City staff intend to send out a RFP so any developer has an opportunity to respond. Ms. Dodd stated that she would check with the City’s Finance Department.

Ms. Yu stated that properties nearby are zoned R-3, Single and Two-Family Residential, and R-5, Medium High Density Multiple Family Residential. She wondered if there was any concerns from the neighbors about the subject property being rezoned to R-5 instead of R-3. Mr. Olsen stated that there was a question about why the City wanted to rezone the property to R-5 rather than to R-4,

Medium Density Multiple Family Residential, brought up at the neighborhood meeting. He explained that City staff decided to rezone the subject property to R-5 because that is what the properties immediately south and the nearby parcel at 1001 South Lierman Avenue are zoned.

Ms. Yu asked why the current zoning of B-3, General Business, does not work for the potential development. Mr. Olsen replied that a multiple family residential dwelling unit would require a special use permit in the B-3 zoning district, which is basically the same process as a rezoning. Taking into consideration the future land use designation for the proposed site, the zoning of the surrounding properties, and the long standing failure of the lot being able to attract a business use, the City decided that a rezoning would be more in line with the long term goals for the parcel. Ms. Yu said it sounds like the potential development could be constructed with or without the proposed zoning, but that by rezoning it makes it easier.

Mr. Fell asked if City Council could impose requirements above those in the Zoning Ordinance or Building Code. Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner/Zoning Administrator, replied yes they could make a project more restrictive.

Chair Allred asked if the developer would be entering into an agreement with the City. Mr. Garcia said that he believed that would be part of the process. Ms. Dodd confirmed. Chair Allred stated that City Council could impose other things as part of the agreement.

With there being no further questions for City staff, Chair Allred opened the hearing for public input.

Kenny Mosley approached the Plan Commission to speak. He stated that he owns a property adjacent to the parcel. He asked who the developer would be and what the plans for the development would look like. He expressed concern about history repeating itself by developing affordable housing there. In the 1980s and 1990s, when there was more affordable housing in the area, it brought the area down; meaning that the crime rate was higher which required more City resources such as the police. Mr. Garcia stated that without knowing if either of the potential developers will get funding, City staff cannot say who the developer will be. When a developer is selected, the City will hold more public meetings for residents to voice concerns and ask questions.

JoAnn Wagenbreth approached the Plan Commission to speak. She stated that she has the same concerns as Mr. Mosley. She mentioned that someone tried breaking into their home on two occasions. She also mentioned that crime was so bad at the old food mart, which was just down the street, that the Urbana Police told the owner that he would need to hire his own security. She said that it seemed to her that most of the crime was being committed by unsupervised teenagers.

With there being no further public input, Chair Allred declared the public input portion closed and opened the hearing for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Ms. Yu asked who owns the larger R-5 parcel. Mr. Garcia replied that the City owns it.

Chair Allred asked if it is correct to say that when the City acquired the proposed property, the City always planned for it to be used as affordable housing. Mr. Garcia said yes. He noted that the original purchase agreement states in the first paragraph that the City would use the lot for affordable housing. This was the whole reason for the City to purchase the lot in 2012. In addition,

the lease agreement with the Lierman Neighborhood Action Committee to use the property for community garden space states that the City would be using the lot for affordable housing in the future. Chair Allred said that because it is a rezoning request, then the Plan Commission should look at all the possible uses allowed in the R-5 zoning district, but keep in mind that it is the City's intention to use the land for affordable housing. Mr. Garcia said that was correct.

Ms. Simms asked if there were multiple affordable housing models. Therefore, the zoning does not turn the proposed site into one conceptualization of affordable housing. Is it correct that once zoned, City staff would use a community process to look at what the variables would be? Mr. Garcia said yes.

Mr. Hopkins said that the City not only intends to use this parcel for affordable housing, we are committed in the funding source for the purchase to use the parcel for affordable housing, correct? Ms. Dodd said that was correct. Mr. Hopkins stated that the parcel then has to be used for affordable housing unless something related to zoning changes.

Mr. Hopkins asked if the City has a definition of "affordable housing" that can include or not include mixed-income housing. Ms. Dodd answered saying that typically "affordable housing" means that an individual does not pay more than 30% of their gross income on rent and utilities, so it is based on each individual's income as to what their rent would be. The City will partner with and work with the developer to determine what the need is and the best way to utilize the property, so it may be mixed-income or it may be all affordable units with vouchers attached to them. At this point, City staff does not know what it will be. She assured everyone at the meeting that once a final plan is prepared, City staff will reach out to the public to get their input before it is brought to City Council for a decision.

Mr. Hopkins felt that the Plan Commission should send this case to the City Council with a recommendation for approval. He stated that his reasoning is given the constraints of what can be done with the property, he believes that R-5 is a better zoning than B-3. The City does not want business on this property, and we are going to have housing. Other properties immediately adjacent to the south and across the street to the south are zoned R-5. However, imbedded in the Plan Commission's discussion and the public input received about the apparent concentration of affordable housing in a particular neighborhood is the message that the City needs to think about the nature of the potential affordable housing development and to commit the other City resources to the neighborhood in terms of crime, Urbana Park District, etc.

Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2464-M-22 to the City Council with a recommendation for approval. Ms. Simms seconded the motion.

Mr. Fell stated that he was mildly uncomfortable of the seemingly non-transparent way that the proposed map amendment has come before them. He trusts that the City administration will handle it appropriately, but not opening the proposed development up to any developer through an RFP does not sit well with him.

Chair Allred agreed with Mr. Hopkins. The Future Land Use in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan supports rezoning the proposed parcel to residential, and R-5 seems to make sense in terms of the surrounding context.

Ms. Yu felt that this case was technically straight forward, but emotionally she echos some of the concerns of the neighbors who spoke. It is a lot of information for the neighbors to process, and she reminded the neighbors that rezoning the property is the first step of making a better community. There will be future steps where the neighborhood can be involved and provide feedback.

Ms. Simms agreed with Ms. Yu's comment. There will be many conversations held regarding design, structures, etc. This will be a long process and neighbors will need to stay involved in the journey.

Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Fell	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Ms. McFarland	-	Yes	Ms. Simms	-	Yes
Ms. Yu	-	Yes	Mr. Allred	-	Yes

The motion passed by unanimous vote. Mr. Garcia stated that this case would be forward to the Committee of the Whole on Monday, December 19, 2022.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

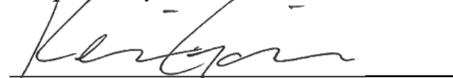
11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission