

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: October 20, 2022

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

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

PLAN COMMISSION

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Dustin Allred, Will Andresen, Lew Hopkins, Karen Simms

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Andrew Fell, Debarah McFarland, Chenxi Yu

STAFF PRESENT: UPTV Camera Operator; Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner/Zoning Administrator; Nick Olsen, Planner II; Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development

PUBLIC PRESENT: David Huber

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

The minutes of the July 21, 2022 regular meeting were presented for approval. Mr. Hopkins suggested the following changes to the minutes: 1) Change “Ms. Hopkins” to “Mr. Hopkins” in the first paragraph on Page 1 and 2) Change “Chair Allred” to “Acting Chair Hopkins” in the third paragraph on Page 3. Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Andresen seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

There was none.

11. STUDY SESSION

Imagine Urbana Community Engagement Summary

Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development, and Nick Olsen, Planner I, presented a summary of the community outreach for Imagine Urbana. Ms. Ruedi began by stating the names of staff who helped with the process up to this point. She asked that the Plan Commission provide input after the presentation. She noted that they tried to keep that text brief and provide more graphics.

Ms. Ruedi talked about the following:

- The Role of the Comprehensive Plan
- How Engagement Happened
 - Setting the Stage
 - Community Outreach Phase Gets Underway
 - Phase 1 Engagement Timeline
 - Assessing Engagement Results
- What We Heard
 - City and Community Services
 - Cultural and Economic Vibrancy
 - Housing and Neighborhoods
 - Transportation and Infrastructure
 - Community Health and Safety

- Diversity of People Leads to Diversity of Ideas
- Community Feedback Priorities
- Looking Forward to the Next Comprehensive Plan
- It's All About U

David Huber approached the Plan Commission to provide input. He stated that he feels that the procedure so far was missing the input from the public on what they are willing to compromise and do to achieve some of the things they desire that takes funding. He stated that there will need to be compromises. He asked how citizens could get more information to be able to make more informed decisions. He stated that he feels it is the responsibility of the City to safeguard the future of the City.

Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner and Zoning Administrator, stated that Mr. Huber captured many of the concerns that City staff had discussed during their internal meetings for updating the Comprehensive Plan. Although staff has not scoped them out with fine detail, staff will be trying to address the concerns voiced by Mr. Huber. Ms. Ruedi added that staff had used the term “tradeoffs” as well when discussing this during internal staff meetings. She noted that the educational process is important as well. Mr. Olsen stated that he agreed. The first step has been, in a sense, a temperature check on a lot of different issues, seeing what the areas of consensus are, and what the more polarizing issues are. From here, staff needs to dive in and see what is going to be feasible within the goals we want to see and how we work out the issues where there is contention. Ms. Ruedi added that they will need to see how they can achieve the goals with the constraint of the budget.

Mr. Garcia recalled that the first time Imagine Urbana was presented to the Plan Commission, Mr. Hopkins had mentioned that “Everyone is all for equity. The hard conversations comes from talking about making it happen.” Good policy is made from having those hard conversations, so staff is looking forward to the next step in the process.

Chair Allred agreed and stated that it was comes across clearly in the Summary report. He asked if any of the Plan Commission members had questions or comments.

Mr. Hopkins talked about the history of updating the Comprehensive Plan in 2002 – 2005 and about Montgomery County, Maryland updating their Comprehensive Plan. He said we should not think of this future update as something to get done but as something that we do. There is no magic to it.

Ms. Simms wondered how the data falls out. To her, if we are going to prioritize equity, disaggregating who said what and where makes a difference when we talk about things that impact people in certain neighborhoods and communities. This would be a great visual map/equity map. If the issue is the locus of power and control and decision-making need to be in the hands of the people most impacted, then you need to know what these people said and not let other people make decisions for and about them. So, it would be important for her to see a demographic report. Then, when we are thinking about righting structural wrongs (equity), she wants to know where the structural wrongs are and overlay them with voice choice and agency.

Ms. Simms stated that when she looks through the information, the people who participate in the democracy start to lose faith when they do not see implementation. Given that this is a long process

that will change and evolve, how is it that people who have been involved believe in the outcome? What is the communication loop to help people stay involved? Because people rarely see the outcome to all the surveying and evaluating, if this process is not done right, it may become yet another source of community wounding. She recommended that staff constantly explaining what they are doing and what has changed and what the impact is to prevent lack of communication.

Ms. Ruedi replied that they heard “government mistrust” and that people have said the same things before and nothing ever happens. When she asked people how they get information about their community, one person said from their neighbor. Some people might get information from their apartment manager. So, communication is one thing that they want to address and learn how to improve. Staff appreciates any thoughts or suggestions on this.

Mr. Olsen talked about data demographics. This is something that staff is interested in exploring. There was an issue with the limitation of data that staff had. There was an option to enter demographic information on the website survey, and it was not consistently done. They do have the neighborhoods of the results from the door-to-door surveys, but not the demographics of each person who took the survey. He stated that staff could breakdown the demographics between the two types of surveys, which produced different results.

Ms. Simms suggested involving students to help with communication or community planning or community development. Again though, they would need to see the full loop. Ms. Ruedi stated that they have a student group that they are currently working with. This group is trying to educate fellow students about their community. Student groups want a meaningful task, and staff could not have completed the door-to-door survey without the student group.

Mr. Hopkins recommended providing demographics of the neighborhoods to find out what they want and how their neighborhood works. Valid survey data where we assume it actually represents and predicts the population’s opinion is incredibly difficult to do, and nothing that staff has been doing during this update process even approaches the criteria for this. So, what we have are indicative ideas, but if we can associate these ideas with different parts of the community, then we can help frame/recognize/acknowledge what is going on.

Mr. Hopkins said that when thinking about educating the population, one of the things to educate them about is the power structure of the City (how the decisions actually get made). People do not see how it happens because most of it is completely disassociated on how it is done. Ideas can be added to the Comprehensive Plan; however, if an idea does not meet the actual criteria to make an idea happen, then it isn’t going to happen. So, educate people so they understand how the things they want get done in the City.

Staff and the Plan Commission discussed the level of details for each neighborhood that should be included in the future update. Mr. Garcia stated that there is a level of neighborhood specificity that people may want to be put in the new Comprehensive Plan that won’t be included; however, that does not mean that staff plans to paint the entire City with just one brush and not have some specific things about neighborhoods. When staff was going out to do Comprehensive Plan outreach, they informed people that they are not tailoring the new Comprehensive Plan to their neighborhood on a super fine level of detail as they might want the City to. Mr. Hopkins stated that the neighborhoods are very different, and he felt it would be a problem not having backing from the Plan about how we want to acknowledge variation amongst neighborhoods. Mr. Allred explained

that his class is working to differentiate between neighborhoods and to come up with specific approaches that apply to certain types of neighborhoods. Rather than having a plan for each neighborhood, they are looking for a way to group them in a way that is meaningful. This is built on Memphis Plan ["Memphis 3.0"; <https://www.memphis3point0.com/>].

Mr. Andresen asked if staff had asked individuals where they lived during outreach projects. Mr. Olsen said that there was a question asking what the nearest intersection was to their home. Enough people answered this question that staff could make a map with quotes from each neighborhood.

Chair Allred stated that the Comprehensive Plan carries weight. People will find in it what they want to find to support their arguments and interests. So, he felt it is important to pay attention to the language and the way things are described. He suggested the following changes to the *Imagine Urbana Summary*:

1. Add language to the graphic on Page 7 stating that these are frequencies of comments on sub-themes;
2. Disaggregate the comments, for example about New Construction because some people interpret it one way while others may consider it as a threat to their neighborhood.
3. Under **Convenient Businesses**, it says "*Some responses would require changing City zoning regulations to allow for mixed-use development that includes diverse types of homes alongside businesses.*" He suggested either pulling this statement or adding more comments like this to other things. By adding comments to other things, it helps educate the public on how to achieve what they want.
4. Page 14, while most of the priorities are positive things moving in the direction of making improvements; however, **Balancing different goals for new development** is too vague. He felt it would be better to disaggregate this statement and have two statements that reflect the different priorities that people have for this.
5. There are a few places where the Summary calls out students voices, and there are no other differentiating of different voices of respondents other than for students. Some people could use this to say that the students are not really people that are a long term part of the community so their voices should not carry that much weight. He suggested leaving in the quotes, but not attributing it to a student member.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he interprets the priorities listed on Page 14 as the goals for the future Comprehensive Plan. He is concerned that other people will interpret them the same way. One way to resolve this is to think about parallel construction. Some of the priorities are so vague and diverse that by the time a group of people interpret them, they will not have any common meaning. When talking about goals or priorities, we either need to identify topics that we have to deal with and don't know what to do or have imperative statements. Ms. Ruedi replied that the priorities were not intended to be goals. They were just the top issues that were brought up enough that staff identified them as priorities.

Ms. Simms stated that she felt that they needed to unpack some of these things. Maybe there is a slide that shows the nuance or contradiction or polarities of both ends. It is important to do some word-smithing around explaining staff's intentions on the graphics. More pictures would be better than a picture that doesn't communicate what staff wants. She agreed with Mr. Hopkins that the priorities should be called something else and should be clear about what they mean.

Ms. Simms left the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Ms. Ruedi expressed her appreciation for the Plan Commission's comments. She stated that staff has looked at the data so much and knows what it says that it has been a challenge to communicate what the data says.

Mr. Hopkins suggested that they consider the *Imagine Urbana Summary* as a working document, and that its purpose is to communicate at a point in time. The City would not be committing to anything and not trying to say that it has been agreed to or approved. This way we minimize the ability for people to make more of this summary than what it is. He did not believe that the Plan Commission had heard enough to say what the next steps should be. Ms. Ruedi stated that she agreed this is not the Plan and that the work to produce the updated Comprehensive Plan had just begun. Another key point to relay is that there will be plenty of more opportunities for the public to provide input. This first phase was to identify the issues, but now they need to address those issues.

Mr. Andresen would like to see how much influence the data study will have on the rest of the process. The data study is a small snapshot of the path that the community would like to take, but these are not actionable items.


The Plan Commission and City staff talked about some ways to improve the document so that it could not be misconstrued. Some ideas include making some of the graphics smaller so they do not seem to be of high importance, removing some of the visualizations, generalizing some of the language, combining some repeated information on the sub-themes, and providing some future considerations or discussion topics for the next phase.

The discussion turned towards how to get the public interested in participating in future endeavors of gathering input on how to resolve issues and concerns expressed in the first phase. Mr. Hopkins suggested that since many of the issues will not become part of the Comprehensive Plan, the staff should educate people on how to get what they need or want. Mr. Garcia mentioned the Equity and Quality of Life Projects program that is currently happening to provide street lights and sidewalks in areas of the City that currently do not have any. He said people are not going to care whether street lights and sidewalks are constructed out of the Comprehensive Plan process or from another program. Mr. Hopkins stated that this is the kind of information that we need to share with people when they express their concerns rather than putting their concerns in the Comprehensive Plan.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Garcia, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission