



APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING #4
NOVEMBER 19, 2013
CITY OF ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS**

The Rock Island Planning Commission held a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting in the City Hall Council Chambers at 1528 – 3rd Avenue, Rock Island, Illinois. The meeting was called to order by Chairman David Levin at 5:30 PM. Present were Commissioners Bruce Harding, Ted Johnson, David Levin, Jason Lopez, Diane Oestreich and Berlinda Tyler-Jamison. Commissioner Bruce Peterson arrived at 5:35 PM and Commissioner Michael Creger arrived at 5:40 PM. Commissioners Norm Moline and Kevin Nolan were absent. Also in attendance were Alan Fries, Ben Griffith and Brandy Howe, and Consultants Scott Harrington and Ashley Robertson of Vandewalle & Associates.

**CONSULTANT PRESENTATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING DISCUSSION BY THE
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Mr. Harrington provided a PowerPoint presentation for the Commissioners, reviewing the elements of the Strategy Development Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. He began by reviewing the “key assets.” There was a lengthy discussion of the West End Employment Center and whether or not the name “West End” was appropriate given the historically negative connotation associated with it. Some Commissioners thought it was a matter of rebranding the area.

Mr. Harrington then presented the four placemaking elements of the plan beginning with the Mississippi River frontage areas, discussing each of them in turn. The Commissioners provided much feedback on each area individually and collectively.

Commissioner Johnson pointed the survey results on page 74 regarding public safety. He stated that he was surprised and disappointed by the responses which seemed to indicate that some residents did not feel safe in their neighborhoods during the day or night. There was much discussion amongst the Commissioners on the topic of public safety and/or the perception of public safety.

Mr. Harrington then presented Positioning Goal #1—International. He stated that in meetings earlier that day with other groups and City staff, there had been much discussion this item. He stated that the intent was to emphasize the strengths of the diversity of the community and utilize it as a strength for the area to become a bigger player in the global economy. Mr. Harrington pointed out that some schools have over 20 languages spoken in them and that rather than view this as an obstacle, the community may want to explore ways to capitalize on this and develop it for the future. Several Commissioners expressed their interpretations of the goal and pointed out the differences between immigrants and refugees and the associated challenges presented to the community in recent years.

After further discussion, Mr. Harrington stated that he would work on refining the goal some more for clarification.

Mr. Harrington then presented Positioning Goal #2—River. He pointed out the differences between the Mississippi and Rock Rivers, how one was more recreational in use and the other more commercialized. The Commissioners were in agreement on most of the contents of this goal.

Mr. Harrington then presented Positioning Goal #3—City Living. He emphasized that this section did not just concentrate on downtown city living, but living in Rock Island as a whole, especially the northern portions of the City. He discussed the look and feel of the neighborhoods and discussed the concept of mixed uses throughout the City.

Chairman Levin announced that he had to leave the meeting at approximately 6:30 PM and passed the gavel to Vice-Chairman Oestreich.

Ms. Howe suggested that the Commissioners may want to discuss the Future Land Use Map, adding that the vision page had been included in the draft, most of the contents based on what was discussed during the visioning workshops.

Vice-Chairman Oestreich asked if the Future Land Use Map needed to be consistent with the Unified Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Harrington stated that future rezonings should be consistent with the future land use map and that the City's zoning ordinance needed to be updated. He pointed out that Moline had updated its zoning ordinance and that their current zoning ordinance was probably 80% compliant with the Unified Zoning Ordinance.

Commissioner Johnson stated that he had a couple of questions regarding the Future Land Use Map. First, he wanted to know why the Columba Park area was shown as white on his map and second, whether or not the Augustana College master plan had been consulted in preparation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Howe answered that the PDF showed it as white when printed out, but that the Columbia Park area should be shown as an "employment center" land use. Mr. Fries stated that the Future Land Use Map follows the college's university zoning classification. Mr. Griffith stated that Kai Swanson had been participating in discussions regarding the Comprehensive Plan, so staff would contact him about the campus master plan.

Several Commissioners pointed out several discrepancies with the Future Land Use Map, especially in the areas of 30th and 38th Streets, between 14th and 18th Avenues. There were also questions about why some schools and churches were shown in different colors on the Future Land Use Map. Ms. Howe explained that schools and churches were given land use designations that are consistent with neighboring land uses (i.e. residential and commercial). In the event that land use would change, the new land use/development would need to be consistent in character to surrounding uses. There was some discussion by the Commissioners on the proposed land uses of particular properties such as the Math & Science Center.

Mr. Harrington stated that although zoning maps and future land use maps are related, they are different, just as an existing land use map is different from a zoning map. He emphasized that a future

land use map is just that, emphasizing “future” and that it would be better to wait until a specific development proposal comes along for a specific area in order to determine what should be done. Mr. Harrington gave an example of upsizing the zoning for a single-family residential area with larger homes, where the upzoning caused many of the homes to be converted into three or four apartment units, which was not the intent of the upzoning at all. He suggested that they consider an overlay type of approach for specific commercial corridors which would include text along with the map to provide criteria for the Planning Commissioners and Aldermen to consider when future development proposals are submitted, because maps alone do not tell the whole story.

Commissioner Johnson stated that the overlay approach would provide guidance to the Commissioners and Aldermen. The Commissioners seemed to be in agreement and discussed several specific development proposals and how to buffer or screen them from adjacent existing residential uses. Mr. Harrington emphasized that the point was to increase the tax base through development, not increase taxes and everyone agreed.

Vice-Chairman Oestreich asked if anyone had additional questions, comments or concerns to please forward them to Brandy as soon as possible so she could incorporate them into the plan. Hearing no further discussion amongst the Commissioners, she asked if anyone in the audience would like to provide public comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Peter Ruklic of 2128 – 32nd Street in Rock Island stepped forward. He began by asking about the City’s visioning strategy, why it was still struggling with its brand/image and what was it hoping to accomplish with the Comprehensive Plan. He began a lengthy commentary about what he thought made the City of Rock Island desirable such as the ability to walk and bike and utilize the bus system without the need for a car. After a while, Vice-Chairman Oestreich stated that since he had made similar comments at previous meetings, could he provide his thoughts in writing to City staff so the Commissioners could thoroughly review his comments.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Swanson stated that she was concerned with the County Courthouse and what the County intended to do about it. She compared the renovation of the County Courthouse with the restoration of Old Main at Augustana College, adding that the area around the Centennial Bridge should be inviting for visitors.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no other business, Vice-Chairman Oestreich asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Tyler-Jamison made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:24 PM. Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission is Tuesday, December 3, 2013 at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Ben Griffith, AICP