

ITEM NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY COUNCIL OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS, IN COUNCIL,  
ASSEMBLED YOUR COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE to Whom  
was Referred a POLICY/WORKSHOP SESSION Regarding  
a PRESENTATION by the PLANNING & GROWTH  
MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT Regarding the HEART of  
PEORIA PLAN**

A Policy/Workshop Session was held on Tuesday, August 10, 2004, in the Council Chambers, Room 400, City Hall, 419 Fulton Street, Peoria, Illinois at 6:18 P.M., with Mayor David Ransburg presiding.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll Call showed the following Council Members Present: Ardis, Grayeb, Gulley (arrived at 6:24 P.M.), Morris, Nichting, Sandberg (arrived at 6:20 P.M.), Spears, Teplitz, Turner, Mayor Ransburg – 10; Absent: Thetford - 1.

Others present: City Manager Randy Oliver, Senior Staff Attorney Kimberly King, Assistant City Manager Alan Pennington, Planning & Growth Management Director Pat Landes, Assistant Director of Planning & Growth Management Ross Black, Planning & Growth Management Staff, Senior Urban Planners Gene Lear and Kimberly Smith, Interim Director of Economic Development Karie Friling, Public Works Director Steve Van Winkle, City Clerk Mary Haynes, Nancy Schmitt from the City Clerk's Office, interested citizens and members of the media.

Members of the Heart of Peoria Commission present: Chairman Ron Budzinski, Vice-Chairman J.P. O'Brien, Beth Akeson, John Blossom, Rev. Tim Criss, Diana Hall, Kert Huber, Tom Leiter, Michael Maloof, Bill Springer, Pat Sullivan, Dan Van Buskirk, Bill Washkuhn and additional members of the Subcommittees,

**PRESENTATION by the PLANNING & GROWTH MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT Regarding  
the HEART of PEORIA PLAN**

Director Pat Landes introduced Ron Budzinski, Chairman of the Heart of Peoria Commission.

Chairman Ron Budzinski gave an overview of the Heart of Peoria Plan and how the five different committees have focused on specific initiatives. Mr. Budzinski explained the Plan was to create a more livable downtown, be pedestrian friendly, create a 24/7 City, and take on urban character. Chairman Budzinski listed the five different Committees; SmartCode, Neighbors, Design, Transportation and Warehouse.

Mr. Bill Washkuhn, Chair of the SmartCode Committee, explained the concept was a building and construction code designed to encourage renovations and reuse of existing buildings. He stated the Unified Development Ordinance was for a mixed use bringing working, playing and living downtown, which he hoped would drive economic development. Mr. Washkuhn said they wished to produce an overlay code with clear rules for development, strong community buy-in, predictability and ease of process to encourage reinvestment and improve the quality of the public realm.

Mr. J. P. O'Brien, Chair of the Neighbors Committee, stated the focus would be on Neighborhood Centers and Community Anchors which would provide walkable designations for neighborhood residents. He said Neighborhood Centers would be composed of several buildings providing a wide variety of services with a mix of uses. Mr. O'Brien said focus would also be on housing, public safety, development of the Southern Gateway, and Riverfront Row House Development. He encouraged the Council to establish Neighborhood Alliances linking neighborhood leadership to neighborhood enhancement programs.

Mr. Michael Maloof, Chair of the Design Committee, explained the focus was to enhance the existing design qualities of unique neighborhoods and areas within the Heart of Peoria Plan area. Mr. Maloof stated they wanted to foster a welcoming, attractive, and safe pedestrian environment and to encourage a design that was compatible with the surrounding properties. He stated the initiatives would be to build consensus with developers and the public and to participate with ongoing and existing projects and establish a broad design goal that could be translated into code.

Mr. John Blossom, Chair of the Transportation Committee, stated the focus was to understand the current projects under construction in the City at the present time. He discussed diagonal parking, the concept of biking areas, the A/B Street Frontage, and how these related to making the area more pedestrian friendly and vehicular safe.

Ms. Diana Hall, Chair of the Warehouse Committee, stated the focus on the overlay district was to prepare the district for easy entry by private development. She said they wished to develop vision for the district and to identify and remove obstacles including hazardous sites. Ms. Hall stated their intention was to recommend regulatory changes as deemed necessary regarding changing code for multi-use in some areas. Ms. Hall stated the committee took a walking tour to give them a better feel of their initial focus.

Chairman Ron Budzinski opened questions from the Council.

Council Member Turner questioned if Taxi Cabs would be involved in this project.

Mr. Blossom stated that CityLink was included in their study and he said he would like to see Trolleys or something of that nature being used. He said he would like to see low cost used in the transportation issues.

Council Member Gulley questioned the success of the diagonal parking. Mr. Blossom said the feedback had been positive regarding diagonal parking.

Council Member Nichting questioned if the Committee had been in contact with property owners in the warehouse district for their input.

Ms. Hall stated the Committee had visited with property owners in the warehouse district to get their viewpoint on what vision they had for their district.

Council Member Sandberg questioned the process of transition in the large diversified area, mostly the Warehouse District, and what role did the Commission take in facilitating projects and concepts that was not compatible with the paradigm that has evolved over the last two years.

Mr. Budzinski stated each Committee narrowed the focus of a particular initiative that was in various parts of the Plan. He said if the Warehouse District was the original focus for housing and Smartcodes, this did not mean they were ignoring what was happening in other areas. He said they were asking for suggestions as to what areas needed to be focused on.

Council Member Sandberg said the zoning codes that were in place made it difficult for new businesses to be established. He stated, when urbanism worked in an area, Staff should be allowed some experimentation and fine-tuning to determine the success of their efforts. He said there were huge areas where current zoning regulations had created disinvestment. Council Member Sandberg stated there were people who wanted to invest in the First, Second, and Third Districts.

Mayor Ransburg stated new businesses interested in locating in a certain district area should check with the Zoning Department to see if the zoning codes would need to be modified.

Council Member Ardis discussed the Smartcode and how it could be adopted and put into play relatively quickly. He said he would like for Staff, Council and citizens to be educated on the Smartcode. He asked for a timeframe on when the Council could see this occur.

Mr. Washkuhn stated they were proceeding cautiously with the Smartcode. He said the Smartcode was a mixed use code and the subcommittee wanted to work side by side in the districts to make the code work for Peoria. He said it would be a good idea to allow Staff more discretion under the current code because of their experience to make decisions needed for this change. He added it would be a learn-as-we-go process.

Mayor Ransburg said he felt it was the Council's intention to adopt the plan and encourage redevelopment and development in the older parts of the City, as Council Member Sandberg pointed out earlier; and he suggested that Mr. Washkuhn and the Staff give the Council suggestions of transitional rule of relaxation on an interim basis for a few months until some applications could be brought back to the Council.

Council Member Morris questioned the number of people who live in the downtown area and if there would be a way to determine the sales tax revenue from that jurisdiction. Mr. Morris also inquired about the occupancy figures for downtown office space. He said the City was rich with a vision of what could be accomplished in the downtown area.

Mr. Budzinski stated the Commission was fortunate to have people on the Committee that were developers and who were already accomplishing some goals without the Smartcodes in place.

Council Member Nichting stated that the market would drive this project forward and, by listening to the developers who were putting out funds to develop, he hoped the market would be there to make this project successful.

Council Member Grayeb stated he was concerned with the new urbanism architecture and if a mixture of design could be used. Mr. Grayeb questioned if businesses would have guidelines as to architectural design.

Mr. Budzinski stated they would encourage diversity, which he thought would make it more successful.

Council Member Gulley questioned some issues that Mr. O'Brien had regarding Neighborhood Associations.

Mr. O'Brien stated he was on the Neighborhood Development Commission and felt the initiatives were the same as of the Heart of Peoria Plan. He said he wished these two groups could work together. He stated it would be good to have a Policy Session on affordable housing and he said he thinks the Council could provide clarity on these issues to the Commissions by giving them goals and measurable objectives.

In discussion the Council requested the staff to address the following issues: (1) develop vital indicators for measuring growth downtown; (2) better define the roles of the Heart of Peoria Commission and Housing and Neighborhood Development Commission; and (3) review the establishment of a Neighborhood Alliance to represent the interest of all Neighborhood Associations.

Mayor Ransburg stated it was good for these Commissions to overlap and communication and collaboration were needed to address housing issues. He said the Council needed to get insight from various bodies to come up with better policies to help the different commissions.

In discussion regarding why the Heart of Peoria Plan was important to Peoria, the Council concluded that this project would be a great opportunity for Peoria, in that it would bring community, economic health, quality of life, local pride, and partnerships between public and private sectors; and this would benefit the whole City, not just the downtown area.

Mayor Ransburg thanked Chairman Ron Budzinski and the Commission for their presentation and the enthusiasm of the Commissioners to see this project go forward.

Council Member Nichting moved that the Council direct the Commission to move forward with the recommendations listed, as long as the Council stayed informed; seconded by Council Member Turner.

The Commission brought forward the following for Council Direction:

SmartCode

1. Continue to expand knowledge of new urbanism.
2. Produce an overlay code to encourage reinvestment.
3. Further investigate "SmartCode" to implement community vision.
4. Test the "SmartCode" in the Warehouse District.
5. Develop short-term strategic intervention to make land use more new urbanistic.

Neighbors

1. \*Develop the feasibility of a Neighborhood Center/Community Anchor.
2. \*Develop the feasibility of Riverfront Row Housing.

Clerk's Note: Later amended to –

1. \*Facilitate the consideration of a Neighborhood Center/Community Anchor.
2. \* Facilitate the consideration of Riverfront Row Housing.

Design

1. Exploration and education of design guidelines.
2. Establish broad design goals that can be translated into code.

Transportation

1. Two Quick Success Targets.
2. Integrate "Related Projects".
3. A/B Street Frontage
4. Bicycle Network

Warehouse

1. Collect background statistical and Building Stock Research.
2. \*Develop a Warehouse District Plan that encourages vitality.

Clerk's Note: Later amended to –

2. \*Develop a Warehouse District concept that creates an environment that encourages vitality.

Council Member Sandberg objected to the motion of approving all the recommendations that the Commission brought forward. He stated he would not support the motion because it was all encompassing and included such things as doing feasibility studies, under the "Neighbors" Committee. He stated he felt that the Commission was to facilitate and not actually perform the feasibility studies of what would play in Peoria.

Council Member Morris stated he felt the label, "Council Direction" in the presentation from the Commission that was brought forward, meant the Commission wanted the Council to pursue this list as priorities for the Commission.

Chair J. P. O'Brien stated that feasibility was probably not the right word to have used and that facilitate should have been used instead.

Council Member Teplitz stated she recognized the suggestions contained under "Council Direction" as being ideas in areas of exploration and interest on the part of the Commission. She said these were recommendations to the City Council. She said she would endorse the suggestions.

Council Member Grayeb stated these ideas would allow Council to implement policies, which would move the City forward.

After an explanation from Ms. Hall, Council Member Sandberg also requested a change in wording under the heading "Warehouse" from "Warehouse District Plan" to "Warehouse District concept."

Council Member Nichting moved to amend the motion that the Council direct the Commission to move forward with direction as outlined, as long as the council remained informed and to amend the list under "Neighbors" by deleting the words "Develop the feasibility" and inserting the words "Facilitate the consideration" and under "Warehouse" deleting the word "Plan" and inserting the words "concept that creates an environment that encourages vitality;" seconded by Council Member Turner.

Motion, as amended was approved by roll call vote:

Yeas: Ardis, Grayeb, Gulley, Morris, Nichting, Sandberg, Spears, Teplitz, Turner, Mayor  
Ransburg – 10;

Nays: None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Council Member Ardis moved to adjourn the Policy/Workshop regarding a Presentation by the Planning & Growth Management Department Regarding the Heart of Peoria Plan; seconded by Council Member Morris

Approved by viva voce vote.

The Policy/Workshop session adjourned at 8:37 P.M.

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Mary L. Haynes, MMC  
City Clerk, Peoria, Illinois

