

United Growth Urban Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Attendees: Herb Ranta, Lori Stanton, John Gussenbauer, Dave Bee, Gail Heffner, Paul Haan, Chuck Hoyt, Mike Williams, Brain Clinger, Barb Holt, Craig Nobbelin, Jay Hoekstra, Rick Chapla, Suzanne Schulz, Carol Townsend, and Andrea Dewey

Welcome and call to order at 9:40am by Paul Haan, Chair

I. Introductions were made, group skips to item B of Old Business while awaiting Suzanne's arrival

II. Old Business – Goal Updates

B. Grand Rapids Urban Partners : Carol Townsend presented an update on Grand Rapids Urban Partners (GRUP). An advisory committee for GRUP has been working with both neighborhood associations and institutions of higher education to create a research center focused on social change that is action oriented and will ultimately build capacity for all partners. The guidelines for this group include: strategically aligning research initiatives so that research is not duplicated, remaining community based and initially neighborhood focused. Eventually GRUP hopes to take a more regional perspective but for now the focus is to facilitate partnerships and centralize resources between faculty and neighborhood associations to accomplish specific goals.

In April the neighborhood associations met to draw up a list of research issues. Then in May the faculty got together to begin discussing the issues. The beginning of June, both the faculty and neighborhood associations met together. From this meeting it seemed the faculty was interested but wanted specific research questions.

Lori Stanton mentioned that it is difficult for the neighborhoods to create research questions themselves and that they were a little disappointed that the faculty didn't grab onto any idea strongly. Gail Heffner went on to say that there is relationship building that still needs to happen between the faculty and the neighborhoods and that the faculty needs to find a link between the issues the neighborhood would like to address and the content the students are learning. Lori said that perhaps part of the problem was that the faculty felt challenged by how to distribute the information to their colleagues and offered to help in this capacity as much as possible.

A. City's zoning re-write process: Suzanne Schulz, the Assistant Planning Director for the City of Grand Rapids, spoke to the group about the status of the City's zoning re-write process. She began by saying that budget cuts continue and that the Planning Department is losing three additional positions. The housing inspection positions have been eliminated and are being replaced

with general code compliance officers, and Sue Thompson is retiring at the end of this month.

Every Wednesday the City has been meeting to go through the proposed zone districts (started with 21) and are following the master plan closely. Suzanne mentioned that this process is extremely technical and difficult for community members to understand if they have not been exposed to the process earlier. Sub-groups for community involvement have not been well attended so the City has stopped them. Using past information from citizens along with the master plan, the City will submit the proposed districts to the community in the fall and have the public help them map them out at that time. The City is still holding to their original timeline for completing the re-write. A full draft should be available by November/December and the plan will probably be adopted in the spring 2006. There seems to be a great deal of support from citizens and developers alike for the master plan; they have even been known to quote passages.

The question of continued community education about the re-write was brought up. Rick Chapla emphasized that the process must be continuous and that perhaps some sort of primer on the re-write could be created.

B. Redevelopment principles:

Andrea Dewey gave an update on the progress of drafting redevelopment principles. She has a copy of CNU's guidelines and will be collecting further information from the internet and faculty and will present a draft to the committee at the July 19th meeting. Committee members with any additional information or sources are encouraged to be in touch with her.

III. Other Business

E. Member Announcements

- ? Jay Hoekstra announced that the GVMC has hope for planning funding in the fall.
- ? Lori Stanton of SWAN will present at the next Urban Committee meeting information on regulated uses and standards. She may ask Herb Ranta or Peter Carlberg to assist in the presentation.
- ? The Executive Committee of the Urban Committee will discuss whether to pursue an update on the Neighborhood Economic Development and GRAND changes at the next Urban Committee meeting.

The August Urban Committee Meeting is cancelled. The Next Urban Committee Meeting is July 19 immediately following the United Growth meeting at Kent MSU Extension.

Submitted by Andrea Dewey