

URBAN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES 7-19-05

Present: Dave Bee, Craig Nobbelin, John Gussenbauer, Mike Williams, Lori Stanton, Peter Carlberg, Jay Hoekstra, Paul Haan, Connie Bohatch, Frank Lynn, Mike Cary, Heather Aldridge, Carol Townsend, and Andrea Dewey

- I. Paul, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order and greeted everyone.
 - A. & B. Introductions were made and minutes were approved.

II. **New Business**

A. History of GR Neighborhoods: Carol Townsend gave a brief history of Grand Rapids neighborhoods in timeline format, highlighting the formation of new neighborhood associations and the 1986 1st annual neighborhood convention. Next year will be the twentieth anniversary of this convention. It was suggested that perhaps it is time to hold an anniversary convention for the neighborhoods. Also of important note is the creation of CONA and that in 1992 the city took over CDBG funding and staffing for all but four neighborhoods in Grand Rapids. GRAND was organized in 1994.

B. Update on GRAND: Connie Bohatch began her history of GRAND starting in 1994 where Carol left off. GRAND stands for the Grand Rapids Alliance for Neighborhood Development.

Historically the city was concerned about how CDBG funds were being used by neighborhood associations and so they began handling the funds for less organized neighborhoods through the city Community Development office. Over time (and with increasing budget difficulties) the city has decided to reduce the direct interaction of the Community Development office with the neighborhood associations, turning instead to GRAND to support CDBG funding decisions and staffing for neighborhood associations. On August 1st of this year the new relationship will be forming between the city, GRAND, and the neighborhood associations. GRAND will begin to function much more independently as an umbrella organization for those neighborhood associations that still do not feel prepared to manage their CDBG money. Training and transition coordinators (including our own Frank Lynn) will help GRAND settle into their new position and in the future, help the neighborhoods become increasingly independent from GRAND (like Heritage Hill.) Currently GRAND encompasses nine neighborhood associations with each one sending a representative to sit on the board, however new standards for membership in GRAND are being considered and this may alter membership (more discretion in membership will be granted to GRAND.) In the meantime the city will take on a more "normal" contractual relationship with both GRAND and the neighborhood associations.

Discussion: Carol posed to the group whether there was anything the urban committee could do to support GRAND in their new role. Lori thought maybe the committee could help them to develop outcome measures. Connie said that there are changes in the categories of activities supported by CDBG beyond just crime prevention and neighborhood improvement, for example federal funds now support increasing business leadership within a neighborhood. Carol brought up again the idea of holding an anniversary Neighborhood Convention next year. She posed these questions: What should be the role or contribution of neighborhood associations in the next 20 years? Why should we have them? It was suggested that each urban committee member could bring an idea about the future role of neighborhood associations to the next meeting. Jay, thinking regionally, wondered what the urban committee could do to support fledgling neighborhood associations and it was agreed that this would be something discussed further next meeting.

- C. Regulated Uses:** Lori Stanton introduced Peter Carlberg who would be discussing regulated uses with the group. Regulated uses are those land uses limited by the city zoning code to prevent a concentration in any one area of the city. Not long ago the Velvet Touch brought the city to court over restrictions on their establishment and the city was overruled. An outside contractor was hired by the city to reinforce and clean up their codes on regulated uses. In the process the contractor limited the focus to just businesses like the Velvet Touch and the rest of the regulated use business monitoring went to another city department. Somehow the majority of the details about restrictions were lost from the regulations. The old regulations used a formula to disperse any regulated uses. For example, a bar could not open within a certain radius of another regulated use or within a certain radius from a residential area. This regulation was standardized, fair and did not depend on personal relationships or favors. Now the city has lost control over the number of alcohol outlets (GR is well over their state quota for liquor licenses), indeed downtown is zoned C3 where there are no restrictions on the number of alcohol serving establishments. The city thinks that by discouraging alcohol outlets and other regulated uses they will hurt the economic development of the city – in fact they want imitate larger cities in the creation of “entertainment districts.” Larger cities (and some college towns) on the other hand, are attempting to limit this sort of ‘economic development’ by placing strict quotas on the issuing of liquor licenses. They have observed the damage that occurs to neighborhoods when the concentrations of regulated uses are too high. It is important to note that there are a finite number of available storefronts in a given neighborhood, and in many cases these businesses are displacing other uses of the space.
- There are questions about what a healthy density of these establishments is for a city, what sorts of “mixed-uses” are compatible with these establishments, and whether not issuing liquor license to every restaurant that wants one will really damage the economic vitality of an area.
- At the next meeting the urban committee will discuss what they can do to help neighborhood associations mobilize to address the city during the present zoning re-write. It is critical that this be addressed soon, because the city hopes to be done with the rewrite before the end of the year. Mr. Carlberg also distributed several handouts to the committee to provide some background information on regulated uses.

III. Old Business

A. Redevelopment principles

Andrea passed out the principles to committee members. This will be discussed further during the September meeting

B. Other

The group also decided that during the next meeting they will look further into a GRAND conference, discuss the purpose of neighborhood associations, and discuss regulated uses further.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.

The August Urban Committee meeting is cancelled.

The next meeting will be at **9:30 a.m. on September 20th** at the MSU Extension office.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Andrea Dewey.