

**HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING
OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

August 5, 2008

3:35 P.M.

Councilwoman Robinson, Chairman, called the meeting of the Health, Human Services, and Housing Opportunities Committee to order with Councilmen Rico, Benson, Berz, Page, Bennett, Shockley, Pierce and Gaines present. City Attorney Randall Nelson and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Barry Bennett, Karen Hundt, Pam Glaser, Greg Haynes, Dan Johnson, Larry Zehnder, Daisy Madison, and Richard Beeland.

M.L. KING COMMUNITY PLAN—KAREN HUNDT

Chairman Robinson stated that Karen Hundt was here to update us, along with Pam Glaser. She turned the meeting over to Ms. Hundt.

Ms. Hundt stated that they had been working on the MLK Community Plan, and she wanted to brief the Council tonight, and she would brief the Planning Commission on Monday; they would take it up for action next month and then it would come back to the Council shortly.

She began by showing the location of the area on a map, stating that they had done a lot of planning; that there were a lot of efforts in the neighborhood. She stated that this Plan was a little different—that some plans dealt only with residences and some only with retail but none had been officially adopted by the City Council. She stated theirs was a more comprehensive area.

Ms. Hundt noted that MLK is an urban neighborhood with mixed use and wonderful history; that they looked at opportunities for re-development, transportation, and public spaces and how MLK connects with the University and Fortwood. She noted that there was a neighborhood meeting last year, and they talked to commercial owners and had meetings with UTC and even set up shop in the Student Center; that they met with CARTA and had had a lot of good input. She stated that this was a road map for the future and was different in that there had already been a rezoning study, and they probably would not be coming back with major rezoning issues.

Ms. Hundt stated that they would focus on infill development in residential areas and also commercial areas—that there is a lot of opportunity for this; that 13% of the parcels are vacant, and there is a lot of opportunity and a lot of room for growth. She stated that they looked at the public space issue and read one of the primary goals, which is to increase the number of residences with diversity of parks, shopping opportunities, and a grocery store; that for retail services in a neighborhood, they have to get the population numbers up. With housing infill, they would make use of vacant lots with single-family, townhouses, and condos and some rental; maybe some residential lofts—a lot of diversity. She stated that they tried to locate large lots that would accommodate larger residential area with some houses and lofts above retail. She stated that this was their proposal in a nutshell for infill housing; that they wanted to make sure that it was compatible and to get the population numbers up.

She next went to commercial infill, stating they would like a lot of mixed use; that they had heard that the neighborhood really wanted to play into the African-American history with music and vital businesses—maybe something like Beale Street in the Chattanooga Entertainment venues; that some wanted good “soul” food and “southern” food; that they could see a mix of things. She noted that MLK is on the National Register for Historic Areas but were teetering on the edge of losing this designation and historic tax credits. She emphasized that we needed to keep historic buildings there.

Ms. Hundt stated that another thing was trying to focus on commercial-retail from Georgia Ave. to the Railroad overpass; that we need to deal with finding a way to share parking.

She went on to say that a grocery store was the number one thing that people wanted to see and a potential site would be McCallie Ave. and MLK; that either location would accommodate a small to mid-size Greenlife type grocery store—more of a community store; that the two best sites would be MLK Blvd. or McCallie Ave., which are both major corridors and would get enough traffic and could work. She noted that UTC owns most of the McCallie side.

Ms. Hundt next talked about the Bessie Smith area, noting that it is the gateway to the community, and we need to play it up; that there is a parking lot across the street, and she showed a rendering of what could happen with nice green spaces to animate the street and focus on this area; that we might tie something in with Patton Parkway and that Warehouse Row is a major innovation; that we need to make this a lively, happening place for tourists and residents.

Ms. Hundt next went to the Farmers' Market site, stating that they had worked with the Mayor's Office and SETHRA, mentioning Interfaith and Community Kitchen and also a Police Precinct; that they wanted to integrate this area with the community and had talked about community gardens somewhere in this area; that there was a lot of light manufacturing, and they had discussed with UTC about looking into an Industrial Design Program at UTC and would put this in this area, which would be a job training and educational community component.

She next went to transportation, mentioning more transit services, noting that the area was pretty well served by a bus line, and they were talking to CARTA about how transit works; that CARTA needed to get past some of their critical issues. She mentioned a smaller circulation route to tie in with major bus routes, mentioning a good street system. She stated that this was a very urban mix, and they would promote a walking area; that they needed to get a whole lot of trees in the area. She mentioned greenway work for the Trust for Public Land.

Ms. Hundt stated that they had been talking about sustainability and were working with Councilwoman Robinson; that they wanted sustainability with this plan as well and wanted to increase the tree canopy; that we had 7% to 8% and needed at least 15%; that they would like to see trees in all the parking lots; that this district needed to have trees planted; that UTC said all of their parking lots would have trees, and the Mayor says that the City will do better—that there are a lot of spaces to plant trees; that we will be focusing on green buildings, building new infill and reclaiming the brownfield sites. She again mentioned a community garden in this area. She ended by saying that this was a lot to “throw” out.

Councilman Pierce stated that he appreciated her making this presentation and that he had a couple of members from the neighborhood association present. He asked if they would like to speak.

Merrie Mai Williamson thanked Ms. Hundt for their attention to this, stating that this was quite a transition and not necessarily in the right direction; that there was a lot of hope in this Plan and unification they were looking for; that it was a good positive direction and some aspects would get support from the neighborhood; however, she stated, one section that the neighborhood would not stand for was the Farmers' Market site; that they were told there would be homeless services, and they had not had their voices heard—that it is just what the Mayor wants and she alerted that people would come in opposition.

Dr. Anita Polk-Conley spoke of transportation issues going along the 11th Street area; that SETHRA had 60 buses planned. She mentioned transportation in and around MLK and 11th Street where there would be a lot of activity when this Plan goes forward; that we need to think about transportation and the impact on the area. She mentioned that the proposal of Fraternity Row was another transportation issue.

She stated that she did know that homeowners were concerned about the aspect of infill with apartments—that this was a major concern; that they wanted to maintain single-family homes as much as possible; that rental property brings problems, and they did not want too much rental activity. She mentioned 3% Social Services was recommended, and they already had a lot higher than this.

Dr. Anita Polk-Conley stated that they needed to look at this in terms of what should be viable and to keep this in mind; that not to make their community supportive of too many social services in the neighborhood. She cautioned against increasing social services without job opportunities; that it will not help to talk about social services unless we couple it with job creation; that it would be doing the neighborhood a disservice.

She stated that she would piggyback on what Merrie Mai had said; that they truly approved letting this go forward and the time spent on this was enormous; that this Report needed to deal with transportation, increasing jobs and economic opportunities and single-family homes in the area.

Councilwoman Berz noted that they had mentioned the Old Farmers' Market and also fraternities.

Dr. Conley stated that the fraternities was a zoning issue.

Councilwoman Berz wanted to know her thoughts on this. Dr. Conley responded that they were waiting until this Plan came forward to see if they could support this zoning change and how it would affect the neighborhood. Councilwoman Berz noted that it was on next week's agenda.

Councilman Pierce stated that he had asked that this zoning be delayed until after the Plan is adopted; that he did not know where the community stands; that we can move on with the Plan if the zoning is supported.

Dr. Conley stated that she would have to look at the presented Plan and look at the documents before they could support it; that Ms. Hundt had done a good job of presenting the Plan, and this is preliminary; that the final Plan will come a month later. She mentioned that Central Ave. showed two ways in and two ways out; that there were four houses and not enough parking to support those; that the area at the back used to be where O'Neal came up and 200 to 400 people off and on will cause a traffic jam. She asked that the City pay for O'Neal to be paved.

Councilwoman Robinson stated that the presence of more people would put more “eyes and ears”. Dr. Conley indicated that the neighborhood was strongly against this—11th St. Fraternity Row.

Councilwoman Bennett stated that this shows the support of the community—that they had rolled up their sleeves and you could not stop this neighborhood.

Dr. Conley noted that a number of people in all aspects work with the homeless providers; that they are expanding services, and the neighborhood could not handle this; that they had worked with the Salvation Army and were not against helping anyone; that it would be beneficial to the homeless to work with their neighborhood as well.

Councilwoman Berz stated two things—that the land is for a Fraternity House—that she hoped everyone would not think that this would stop—that it will grow; that she strongly supported a time-line if this is ongoing; that there is a briefing next week at the Planning Commission and all sides should be aware of this; that she did not know how she would vote, but she wanted to be educated.

Ms. Hundt stated that there was a proposed Fraternity Row if this goes forward with R-4; that they might consider C-3 where the neighborhood would have a little more say about the buildings and how they fit in; that C-3 does not address traffic.

Dr. Conley responded that she understood there was a Special Permit needed for R-4 and there might not be one for C-3; that there was a concern if the zoning is changed—only for fraternities and sororities; that they needed some type of control.

Pam Glaser explained that one of the reasons for this idea was getting fraternities closer to the campus and mentioned maybe a short-time lease; that fraternities and sororities are under pressure and in need and this might be a short-time solution and UTC could later create a Fraternity Row; that you could get conditional rights in C-3 and then an opportunity might happen closer to the campus.

Councilwoman Bennett mentioned Fort Wood and looking at balance and how things fit collectively; that she was wondering if the zoning serves the purpose for balance.

Ms. Hundt mentioned the 3% of group homes, noting that Fraternities also fit in that category.

Councilman Pierce stated that the residents need an opportunity to meet with the developer; that a month would give them time to work with the developer and designer and would give them a better feel; that he would like to ask that this rezoning be tabled for five weeks and then move on the Plan and the rezoning at the same time.

Chairman Robinson stated that she thought this was reasonable.

Mr. Bennett stated that he had a question about timing; that he would assume that the Plan would come to Planning the second Monday in September and it would take until October to move forward; that it is unlike zoning cases that have to be advertised; that action on adopting the Plan would be a Resolution; that if the Plan comes before the Planning Commission in September, it could come to the Council the next day (Tuesday).

Councilman Pierce wanted to know what was wrong with five weeks?

Attorney Nelson noted that the Public Hearing was already advertised for next Tuesday and if we delay this, it would have to be re-advertised at some additional expense; that we could have the Public Hearing and then defer action.

Councilman Pierce stated that he had no problem with having it passed on first reading next week before everything is finalized.

Attorney Nelson stated that we needed to go ahead with the Public Hearing.

Chairman Robinson stated that she was concerned about the parking across from the Bessie Smith Hall; that mopeds and scooters are here to stay, and they should always have parking pads; that the bikes parking should be painted green, and they should get preferential treatment as a reward.

Greg Haynes pointed out that the main difference between C-3 and R-4 is parking; that C-3 has no parking requirements. Councilman Pierce stated that we should stay with R-4 then.

Mr. Bennett questioned if we wanted this to come to the Council the day after the Planning Commission meeting in September? Dr. Conley pointed out to Councilman Pierce that that would be his five weeks.

Councilman Pierce stated that members from the community should go listen when this goes before the Planning Commission.

Councilwoman Berz stated that they might not be aware of the date; that she wanted to make sure their voices were heard.

Merrie Mai Williamson responded that she appreciated that; that this was a full-time job for them and was hard, and she appreciated someone being cognizant of this fact.

Mr. Haynes reminded that the Planning Commission would not be voting this coming Monday.

Councilwoman Berz stated that she just wanted them to have the opportunity for the full input and asked if this coming Monday was not a public meeting?

Chairman Robinson thanked everyone, stating that this was superb meeting.

Councilman Pierce asked if we were through with this, he would like to recognize the young man that was taking Michael Davis' place. He is Cliff Hightower.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.