

MINUTES
CITY OF DUBUQUE LONG RANGE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

City Council Chambers, Historic Federal Building

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Michael Rabagia, Commissioners Jason Davis, Aaron Miller, Julietta Scott, and Mark Ward.

Commissioners Excused: Beth McGrath, Cliff Conrad

Commissioners Unexcused: None.

Staff Members Present: Wally Wernimont and Jason Duba.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Rabagia at 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES: Motion by Rabagia, seconded by Miller, to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2025 Long Range Planning Advisory Commission meeting as submitted. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye – Davis, Miller, Scott, Ward, and Rabagia; Nay – None.

Planning Services Director Wernimont reviewed a memo prepared to respond to questions that arose at the prior meeting related to the Cedar Cross Road Urban Revitalization District that the commission reviewed. He noted the estimate of the amount of property taxes that would be abated for the developer, which would be approximately \$2.2 million over 10 years. He explained the total depends on factors such as the timing of construction and noted that the school district's portion of the property tax is not abated. He shared an estimate on the cost of public improvements from the last time the property was proposed to be developed, which was about \$400,000.

Commissioner Miller described how his opinion on this matter has changed as he's learned more about the definition of Urban Revitalization and how it's common to use for new construction, not just renovating old properties. Wernimont responded that creation of housing is one of the four uses of Urban Revitalization. He noted that once the City Council passed an ordinance to start using these incentives, the city started seeing more development, which is needed to meet the demand for housing. He explained that the school district is consulted on these districts, and they support the creation of new housing to grow the number of students in the district. He clarified the difference between Urban Revitalization where property taxes are abated and Urban Renewal where property taxes are rebated.

Commissioner Ward asked if some properties starting to come off their tax abatement period. Wernimont noted that some are, such as Timber Hyrst.

Commissioner Davis asked about the property tax portion for the school district. Assistant Planner Duba displayed the “Dollars & Cents” budget document from the City of Dubuque, which shows the school district collects 43% of property taxes from Dubuque residents.

Wernimont spoke to the role of the commission in reviewing these applications and explained that they are asked to consider whether they are in alignment with the comprehensive plan. He said that it is City Council’s role to consider the finances of these agreements but that he would like to have that information ahead of time, but that can be difficult. Miller acknowledged they review with respect to the comprehensive plan, but it is good to see the financial side.

Wernimont said that these incentives help develop housing in places where it’s needed, including along Radford Road, which is close to the industrial center. He noted a recent tour of Opening Doors, where transportation was cited as a barrier to self-sufficiency.

Commissioners noted that it is a yearslong effort to develop more housing and that previous estimates for housing need were made before the announcement of the UD medical school being developed. Wernimont agreed and said that downtown Dubuque is changing, and the City is seeking to allow more density to promote vibrancy. A downtown master plan is in the works in the next few years.

ITEMS FROM PUBLIC: None.

ITEMS FROM COMMISSION: None.

ITEMS FROM STAFF:

Imagine Dubuque Update

Assistant Planner Duba and Planning Services Director Wernimont led a review of selected progress updates about Imagine Dubuque recommendations. One selection was made from each of the plan’s seven categories.

Economic Prosperity: Employment, 1.1.4: Efforts of the Community Foundation, such as Inclusive Dubuque, were noted for their work to promote economic resiliency and mitigate the impact of economic disruptions locally.

Miller noted that a Council update on Project HOPE cited a study that showed Dubuque is #1 in the country for economic mobility.

Sustainable Environment: Neighborhoods, 2.3.2: Arbor Day Celebration coordinated with Dubuque Trees Forever and Dubuque Arboretum. Branching Out Initiative is planning spring plantings.

Chairperson Rabagia asked if the city is planting back with diverse species of trees, and Wernimont replied yes, that is the goal. He cites examples of Dutch Elm Disease and the impact to the Cathedral of Elms that was on Rhomberg Avenue.

Social + Cultural Vibrancy: Parks & Recreation, 3.7.1: The Parks & Recreation Master Plan is being developed now. Wernimont mentioned there is also a community sports facility study that was recently completed.

Livable Neighborhoods + Housing: Housing, 4.2.2: The Housing and Community Development Department recently went through the CDBG Consolidated Plan (5-year) and Annual Action Plan processes to plan for the future and remain compliant with HUD.

Community Facilities: Public Safety, 5.2.3: A strategic plan around response times, officer placement, and geographic coverage will be developed. Rabagia noted the fire department survey.

Transportation + Mobility: Complete Streets, 6.1.3: Plans for Complete Streets - Considering new bike lanes on South Grandview and West Locust.

Land Use: Industrial, 7.6.3: Industrial development opportunities limited, such as at Crossroads site.

Unified Development Code update

Commissioner Davis asked about the Unified Development Code status. He referred to the recent rezoning of the landfill property. Wernimont replied that we're in the process of the UDC update, and the technical report will be released soon. He said the comp plan and other city plans will factor into the process. He noted some of the potential changes to increase flexibility, reduce parking requirements, and allow more density. He noted the consultant is Camiros, who is providing national experience that will be balanced with local needs. He said the existing 2009 UDC is a good starting point. He said there will be presentations to the Zoning Advisory Commission and City Council about the technical report.

City Council Goal Setting for Fiscal Year 2026

Wernimont explained the City Council Goal Setting process and how the commission could contribute ideas. Commissioners suggested:

- Develop more 3- and 4-bedroom units that are affordable
- Continue developing single-family homes
- Develop a multi-sport complex

- Reduce tax burden
- Have more pet-friendly businesses

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Rabagia, seconded by Miller, to adjourn the May 21, 2025 Long Range Planning Advisory Commission meeting. Motion carried by the following vote: Aye –Davis, Miller, Scott, Ward, and Rabagia; Nay – None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Wally Wernimont, Planning Services Director

August 20, 2025

Adopted