

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL  
390 N. Robert St., St. Paul, MN 55101**

**MEETING OF  
LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
September 20, 2012**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jon Commers, Andy Hestness, Chip Halbach, Kim Kang, Kristina Smitten, Tami Diehm, Phillip Klein, Bill Droste, Elizabeth Wefel, Elizabeth Kautz, Amy Ihlan, George Johnson, Kathi Hemken, Scott Hoke, Jon Ulrich, David Elvig,

**ABSENT:** Gregory Boe, Bill Neuendorf

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Commers called the meeting of the Land Use Advisory Committee to order at 4:01 p.m. on Thursday, September 20, 2012.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

Commerz asked for approval of the proposed September 20, 2012 agenda. It was moved by Hemken and seconded by Droste. **The motion carried.**

Commerz asked for approval of the July 19, 2012 meeting. It was moved by.... and seconded by Klein. **The motion carried.**

**BUSINESS**

**LUAC Membership – Jon Commers**

Commerz noted that all members received a letter regarding the nature of service for the committee. He reiterated that LUAC is in a unique position to provide feedback to the Council on the Thrive 2040 Plan. He stated that there is a collaborative approach to putting this plan together and discussed Listening Sessions being conducted to solicit feedback from citizens. Commers continued to give examples of how LUAC can contribute to this feedback and feels this feedback is valuable.

**Health Planning: A Review of Developed Community Comprehensive Plans**

- Patrick Boylan, Local Planning Assistance
- Kristin Raab and Kelly Muellman, MN Dept. of Health

Boylan introduced himself and discussed work that he has done in conjunction with the Department of Health on a study looking at a health impact assessment as it relates to long-range comprehensive plans in the seven-county metropolitan area.

Kristin Raab, Director, MN Climate and Health Program at the MN Department of Health (MDH), introduced herself and Kelly Muellman, Planner with the MDH. The two gave a presentation on the work that they've been doing around health and comprehensive planning.

Raab gave a brief background on the Health Department and described the drivers of population health and the relationship between health and good planning and why they undertook this study. She discussed their mission and three goals that relate to both their mission and to comprehensive planning (listed in the handouts provided).

Raab discussed individual factors responsible for population health and noted that actual health care only amounts to about 10% of our overall health. Other factors such as genetics (30%), social, environmental

conditions, and behavior make up the rest. She noted that comprehensive planning plays a role in many of these factors. She discussed recent activities of the MDH including:

- Collaboration with the Met Council, EQB, DNR, MnDOT, Agriculture, and the PCA
- Providing education/training
- Developing reports/tools on EAW process, health indicators for local planning, and planning for extreme heat events

Raab discussed the study that was done, the process, and the 11 health indicators that were reviewed (outlined in the materials provided). She noted that a copy of the full report could be made available upon request.

Klein asked for some examples of traffic calming techniques. Raab gave an example of a bump-out of a sidewalk in larger intersections so there is a shorter distance for people to cross.

Raab stated, regarding park needs, that they are hoping the new policy plan (Regional Development Framework / Thrive MSP 2030) will encourage cities to be looking at their local park needs and connecting them with the regional systems, as well as systems that cross jurisdictions. She also discussed access to trails.

Raab discussed climate change and its impact on public health.

Wefel asked for the definition of the heat index.

Klein asked if a slide on extreme heat and increases in illness covers a geographic area or Minnesota. Raab said the information covers 90 percent of hospitals in Minnesota, and information by regions is not available yet.

Kautz stated that climate change can be controversial. In Burnsville they have a sustainability plan which covers a lot of this. She noted that they may not use the exact terminology in their plan that the MDH is looking for, but they have looked at this issue and are doing a lot to prepare for extreme events and other changes. Raab stated she understood. Kautz requested the entire MDH report.

Kautz discussed water supply and noted we need to be careful in talking about water supply. It needs to be simplified and streamlined; it's not a regional system within the Metropolitan Council's statutory authority. Kautz said there will be push back on water because this comes on top of all other agencies and water is not a regional system. Commers stated it is not a 'system' but it is a regional asset and therefore appropriate for the Council to collaborate on it. Kautz said we all look to Burnsville and Savage's collaboration. Kautz cautioned that the difficulty comes with too many agencies that cities have to work in collaboration with in order to get anything done. Commers stated that they are hearing this in the Listing Sessions; that there needs to be clarity on whose roles are what. Kautz asked if DNR is the appropriate agency or Health and if need to go to the Metropolitan Council.

Klein agreed with Kautz and added that the methodology of determining if too much water is used and how things are evaluated needs to be addressed.

Droste said there are no boundaries for water and sewers, and we need to change regulations. Droste stated that it make sense to have one network (one system) for water as it would be more efficient. Many jurisdictions share the same aquifer. Kautz questioned which agency should do this and stated that they'll push back against the Metropolitan Council as it is not within their statutory authority.

Commers stated that this is just an informational presentation.

Raab completed her presentation and turned it over to Muellman who discussed additional health and planning activities.

Muellman discussed a second report that outlined twelve additional indicators. She stated that there will be a “Minnesota Healthy Planning Training: Addressing Health in Comprehensive Plans” that will be presented at the APA Conference next week that will cover eight desired health goals as well as twenty planning strategies to achieve desired health goals. She noted that they have developed a “Minnesota Healthy Planning How-To Guide” as well.

Commers asked for questions.

Ihlan asked why increased greenery is helpful to health. Raab discussed the mental health benefits and acknowledged that there needs to be a balance between goals, for example, density and greenery.

Smitten noted the report on tree canopy and income. She also asked about some of the indicators discussed and the bridge, specifically to health, vs. just good land use planning. She also asked if the study looked at communities that had funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) and if there were any connections to Health Impact Assessments, such as GreenStep Cities. Raab stated that communities working with BCBS tended to score higher, but because of the methodology used, they do not want comparisons done because of the variables determined by what language was used.

Smitten asked if did key word search on health. Raab stated no, but they identified specifics.

Kautz stated that reviews should also look at other plans (for example, they have a sustainability plan). She noted that Burnsville did GHG baseline and stated that many communities have already done reports like this and have plans and funding mechanisms for this. Kautz recommended looking at these. She also discussed her concern with affordable housing and how does it relate to health. She also stated that housing is not a regional system. Raab stated there are many links with health and affordable housing. Without it, there may be overcrowding and disease. Kautz asked what affordable housing means and how it’s measured.

Halbach agreed that there are differences in how use terms to create the indicator. He stated that it is commendable to address affordable housing but it is important to define components carefully. He is puzzled to see that all 53 plans were “yes” for it, while he knows there are plans not addressing it well. The relationship to the Met Council should be a separate discussion as they have an immense role. Raab stated that they did a key word search. She said affordable housing is a requirement, and many mentioned it but did not explain how they would address it.

Commers asked from a city perspective is this an area to emphasize on the next comprehensive plan update. Klein stated that Hugo is putting in trails to connect to the trail system and encourage walking. Kautz stated that implementation is difficult for developed cities because of right of way and cost. This needs to be assessed. Cities do things because it’s the right thing to do. She noted her role in getting the Livable Communities program created.

Diehm discussed the challenges for developed communities. She stated that these issues are all interesting, but we must be consistent with comprehensive plans. So there could be a problem if include specific things in plan. Hemken stated that she is worried that they do things but because they don’t use the proper verbiage the Metropolitan Council will reject their comprehensive plan. Raab stated that this was just a review and are not requirements.

Droste discussed the affordable housing index and low interest rates and how the index is the best in 40 years. He mentioned that on a health note, they put community gardens in their parks and the demand was triple what they offered. Droste said there are many ways to do this.

Elvig believes there is a Metropolitan Council role for health, for example, with parks. He discussed how affordable housing is not always healthy. He suggested regulation on rentals maybe helpful to reduce over-crowding, etc. He also stated that help with connectivity between communities with trails would be very helpful.

### **Land Use and Planning Resources Report: Revisit Report and Key Lessons for Thrive MSP – Jon Commers**

Commers highlighted themes in the report and said it provides strong research and is relevant, so he wants to make sure it is not left on the table. He discussed the importance of language, for example density. He asked to what extent this remains controversial and whether it is a barrier.

Hemken stated that many equate high density with low income.

Wefel stated that language is important, such as about climate change. But she is more worried about how to confront the real issues and change the mind-set rather than the language.

Droste stated that density is less of an issue now than it was 15 years ago, but how you define it is important – it needs a framework. He stated that townhomes are more acceptable today than they were 15 years ago.

Halbach agreed but cautioned to be mindful of what terms and concepts we're 'shooting for' and what are the means to getting to what we are 'shooting for.' For example, the goal is efficiency and healthiness and affordability. Density is a tool to get there.

Klein said we should focus on the end result. Halbach stated that we should not mix the means with the end. We may need density to get to a goal, and we need a variety of ways to get there.

Droste stated we need to be more aggressive about density to support efficient systems.

Commers stated he shares the goal of 'straight language' however he is a bit hung up on whether density does that.

Kautz stated they have housing zones in Burnsville and they talk about the product, i.e., single family home, townhome, multi-family home, etc. (rather than density) within the zone. They talk of housing stock, diversification, and meeting work force needs. She stated that their goal is for 70% ownership and only 30% rental.

Elvig talked about pockets of density they want in only certain areas.

Smitten appreciates the goal of clear language and policy. She feels it needs to be in context, i.e., density is needed in major transit corridors but is not as appropriate in older, established neighborhoods.

Commers asked if there are any other themes in the report that anyone wanted to discuss.

Halbach stated there are many good questions in the summary provided and was expecting more discussion on this. He would like to prioritize what messages this Committee would like to send forward to the Council. He noted that 'affordable housing' needs to be dug into rather than just a term.

Commers stated he believes the LUPR report speaks directly to Kautz's issues, where the Council does not have purview, but with regional scale there are opportunities for convening and collaboration.

Diehm stated that originally she worried about mandates in LUPR, but feels it is more exciting as opportunities for access to regional solutions present themselves.

Smitten cautioned that it is important for the Council to determine its role, for example, with green house gases and noted they need to be purposeful where the region has an interest.

Elvig agreed and stated that fresh water coordination is good. He feels that it's odd that it hasn't been a connection yet; but streamlining and clear direction is crucial.

Halbach stated he supports what's being said, but understands sensitivity of regulation. Thrive isn't about regulation, rather it's about vision and goals. He stated policy and system plans are the tools and we need a sense of where we're going first.

#### **Other Business – Deb Detrick**

Detrick reminded members that the next meeting will be November 15. She also pointed out the handout on the Listening Sessions and stated that if members have not already participated, they are encouraged to do so. She also stated that there is a Committee of the Whole Meeting coming up and noted that an email will be sent regarding this.

Halbach asked how our work supports Thrive MSP. He wants clarification of LUAC/Thrive connection.

Commers stated that reports to CDC haven't had much impact and suggested that a short written report with key findings from the last two meetings would be better. He is open to ideas. Halbach said that is a good idea, and he suggested identifying key land use decisions the Council will need to be making and figure out how we can advise them on these key decisions. Commers stated this is an interesting idea, and he would like to think about how we can 'map this out.'

Detrick commented that there is a Policy Development Team here at the Council and she will inform them of this discussion. She also commented that Committee presenters have stated how much they value feedback from this Committee.

Droste stated he is still struggling with the water issue and feels the 'water element,' which directly relates to the housing element and the transportation element is a critical component of developing the metropolitan area. Klein said the Council is picking up on water. Commers stated that water is a strong theme.

Smitten stated the role of the Council should be to identify areas of water supply challenges and then determine its role beyond that. Droste added that when it comes to drinking water, he sees it as one system and that one entity should be providing direction to all communities on it.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

November 15, 2012 at 4:00 pm at the Metropolitan Council in Room LLA.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandi Dingle, Principal Administrative Specialist