



**Agenda Item #:** 15

**Project Title:** Updates to Chapter 33.24, Urban Design Commission Ordinance

**Legistar File ID #:** 71257

**Members Present:** Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Tom DeChant, Shane Bernau, Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper, Christian Albouras, Jessica Klehr and Russell Knudson.

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Summary

### SUMMARY:

At its meeting of May 11, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **DISCUSSED** the timeline and phasing of the updates to Chapter 33.24, Urban Design Commission Ordinance. Jessica Vaughn, UDC Secretary noted that this will likely be 4-5 overall phases, with the timelines general in nature and varying depending on the levels of complexities. Phase 1 includes administrative updates, and clarifications to process and procedures already in practice. Staff is requesting feedback on this list and any items to be added.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I'm excited to see this process kicking off. Phase 1 mentions removing the detailed plant lists, I'd love to hear some of the landscape savvy Commissioners' opinion. Should there be some guidance retained depending on the make-up of this Commission?
- Those plant lists are located in UDDs 1 and 2 only. They have not been updated to reflect current modern plantings and contain some that are invasive.
- These are advisory plant lists, not requirements and are not as restrictive as other sections of the code.
- I think it's hard to keep up on the plant list, even if it is a good one. As things evolve and change, it's hard to continually edit that. I would question any value if our applicants were really leaning on that in the first place, or if they were hiring professionals with that institutional knowledge. Don't see firsthand that it was beneficial from my perception.
- We have lists in the Zoning Code, Forestry, a master list and UDD lists.
- I remember having discussions early on in my tenure about the outdated nature of the plant list. We're asking people not to use plants that are problematic but there's no legal weight behind it. If you want lists of what we'd like to see, where do you stop? We just try to steer people in the right direction, codifying it seems tricky. I don't sense that people are looking at those plant lists as they're designing in these areas.
- It's a microcosm of how this code update could progress. I read the general process as more removal, I question whether staff is seeing more problems related to erroneous info in the code, or if the problems are incorrect or missing information. I've not heard from applicants there is a need to remove this.
- Since that plant list has not been updated since its inception, I don't think it provides very good guidance. If we are interested in providing plant lists, Christian said it best: what guidance do we want to provide and what plants are on that list? Is it a larger conversation of looking at all the district or just some, where does it go from there? Then you're looking at a combination of Forestry and other experts. The majority of plans we get are prepared by registered licensed landscape architects, and I've never gotten a question about the plant lists for

UDD 1 and 2. I do think updating the planting lists, keeping up to speed with what's current practice with regard to native species, infestations and diseases is a difficult task, and if it's in the code, it's even more difficult.

- I'm looking forward to the working sessions, this is exciting. After the City Attorney draft of the ordinance amendment, is there opportunity or need for UDC to gather on that draft and review it? What is the flow of information after the City Attorney, straight to Common Council?
- Our initial discussion tonight is about that scope, whether this list is something we want to pursue, add to or subtract from. Then we'd coordinate with City Attorney to draft that, and return back to this Commission to review those changes.
- We've previously touched on how we should be dealing with "boring architecture." Is this a good place to start that conversation?
- Glad you mentioned that. This first phase would be general powers and duties. If we don't include something with regard to the purpose and intent of the Commission, those could be broad or restrictive, now's the time to have that discussion.
- And about sustainability standards. We don't have documentation about how the UDC feels about that and how we follow through.
- Those conversations would be part of Phase 3, reevaluation of big picture design guidelines in general. Sustainability is mentioned specifically in that section as well.
- Yes exactly, the intent. The first phase is quick clean up items to get the code to align with current practices with a shorter time frame, and to clarify language that was perhaps a bit confusing. The bigger policy lifts are a much more intensive process as part of Phase 3.
- What you say to a bad building is a much bigger question that comes back to intent and purpose of the whole Commission.
- That would be undertaken in Phase 3, which fits in nicely with modernizing since this section hasn't been updated except to create new districts. Rethinking the intent and purpose is part of that conversation. Clarity, consistency and transparency.
- We don't have any powers for sustainability features, save for criteria for a PD. If we want to expand our purpose and intent to include sustainability, that's probably less of a housekeeping thing than a larger policy change. If it is in Phase 3 it doesn't mean we have to rewrite each and every UDD, perhaps it becomes overarching for all or most districts.