

STUDY SESSION
Economic Development Strategic Plan
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
February 22, 2021
5:30 p.m.

AGENDA

Requested by the City Manager

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

At the Study Session of the City Council of University City held via videoconference, on Monday, February 22, 2021, Mayor Terry Crow called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

In addition to the Mayor, the following members of Council were present:

Councilmember Stacy Clay
Councilmember Aleta Klein
Councilmember Steven McMahon
Councilmember Jeffrey Hales
Councilmember Tim Cusick
Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson

Also, in attendance were City Manager, Gregory Rose; City Attorney, John F. Mulligan, Jr.; Director of Planning and Zoning, Clifford Cross; Stephen Ibendahl, Beth Noonan, Alison Gray, and Jacqueline Davis of the I-5 Planning Team.

2. CHANGES TO REGULAR AGENDA

No substantive changes requested.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Mr. Rose stated this is a presentation from the I-5 Planning Team on the City's Proposed Economic Development Strategy.

Mr. Cross stated in October of last year Mr. Ibendahl and his team provided Council with an update on the status of the Proposed Economic Development Strategy they have been working on in conjunction with the Economic Development Task Force. He stated tonight's presentation includes an overview of the process and their Executive Summary.

Mr. Ibendahl introduced his team members and provided the following overview:

Schedule of Events

- September: Release of the Draft Recommendations and Community Engagement
- October 12th: Council Work Session on Draft Recommendations
- End of October: Release of Draft Economic Development Strategy document posted on the website
 - Over 630 page views of website Sept 1 –Oct 30th
 - Over 900 page views of website Sept 1–Feb (Current)
- November 1 –30th: Public Comment of the Draft Economic Development Strategy
 - Six Zoom Small Group Meetings over a two-week period

Role of Task Force

The Planning Team conducted five meetings with the Task Force during the process and held an additional listening session on December 21st.

- Comprised of representatives from across the City selected by City Council and the Mayor
- "Ad-Hoc" Advisory Committee and sounding board for the planning team
- Assisted in developing a shared strategy

Key Changes Based on Comments

Comments received from the website, public sessions, and Task Force.

- The addition of an Executive Summary highlighting the six core principles of the plan
- Coordination with UMSL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Accelerator program to attract minority entrepreneurs to the City
- Changed Level 2 priority to Level 1; "Create and administer business survey instrument to capture short and likely long-term impacts of COVID-19 and business needs..."

Economic Development Strategy

Principle 1: Grow Existing and Emerging Business Sectors.

- **What Are the Strengths and Assets of U City?**
 - Accommodations & Food Service
 - Health Care & Social Assistance
 - Retail
 - Professional, Scientific, and Technical
 - Manufacturing
 - Residential
- **Goals**
 - Support core industry strengths to increase tax revenues
 - Foster increased industry diversity to create a more resilient economy
- **Measuring Success**
 - Increase of existing and emerging cluster businesses
 - Increase in property and sales tax revenues

Principle 2: Ensure Equitable Economic Opportunities

- **Making Sure That All Businesses & Residents Are Included In the City's Policies and Programs**
- **Goals**
 - Invest in the 3rd Ward
 - Support minority entrepreneurs
 - Equitable City policies and practices
- **Measuring Success**
 - Increase in household income, especially in the 3rd Ward
 - NOVUS and City revenue invested in the 3rd Ward
 - Increase in the number of minority businesses receiving City contracts

Principle 3: Support University City Businesses and Workers.

- **Talent Retention & Development Strategies**
- **Goals**
 - Focus on the needs of existing businesses
 - Invest in workforce development for residents
 - Retain existing businesses
 - Increased focus on the International District
 - Amplify the voice of local businesses

- Grow next generation of small business owners
- Support additional neighborhood retail
- **Measuring Success**
 - Increase level of business satisfaction with operating in U City
 - Increase the number of City residents employed by targeted industry cluster businesses

Principle 4: Collaborate With Local and Regional Partners

- **Effective Collaboration With Local Economic Drivers and Regional Organizations**
- **Goals**
 - Strengthen relationship with Washington University
 - Connect to regional economic resources
 - Align regional agencies for investment along Olive Blvd.
- **Measuring Success**
 - A mutually beneficial relationship with Washington University
 - Additional resources for infrastructure improvements

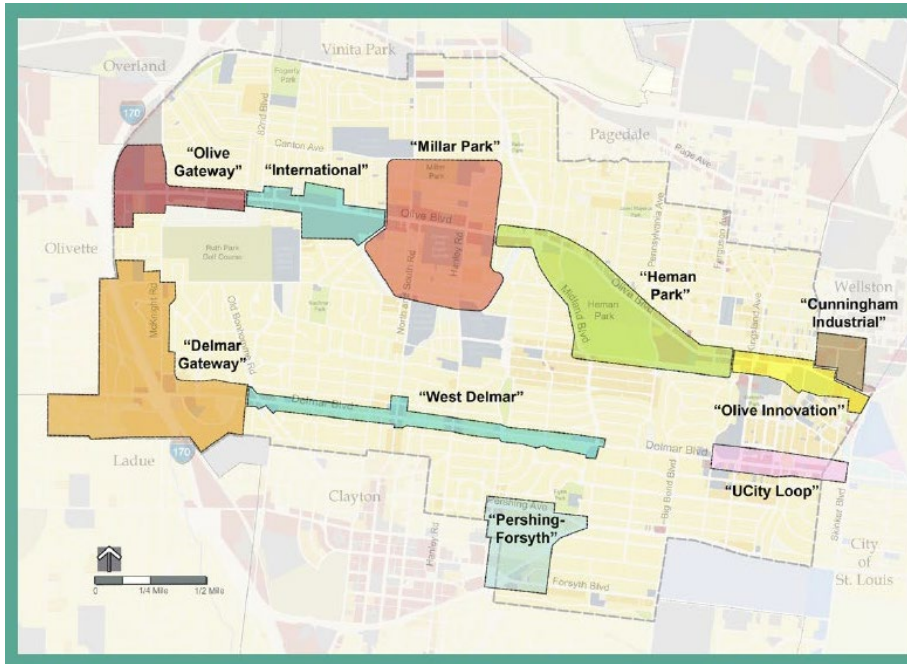
Principle 5: Celebrate and Promote University City

- **Effectively Communicating a Positive Brand or Image**
- **Goals**
 - Maximize online economic development impact
 - Elevate U City's brand
 - Market distinct areas of the City
 - Celebrate the arts in U City
- **Measuring Success**
 - Increase in website visits to "Explore U City" and followers on social media
 - Increase in sales tax revenues generated by specific districts in U City

Principle 6: Utilize Place-Based Solutions

- **Laying the Groundwork for Expanding Revitalization, Investment, and Growth to New Areas in the City**
- **Goals**
 - Redevelop and reinvest in Olive Blvd.
 - Maintain The Loop as a top ten street
 - Enhance visitor experience city-wide
- **Measuring Success**
 - Completion of streetscape and infrastructure improvements
 - An increase in the number of vacant or underutilized properties occupied and redeveloped
- ❖ *Each of these six Principles in the Economic Development Strategy includes a set of action steps sorted by priority, some of which can be found in the Implementation Phase.*

Districts: A Framework for Place-Based Growth



This map illustrates proposed Districts that should be thought of as a framework for locating strategies in different areas of the City. In some Districts, new development or redevelopment may be a key recommendation. In other Districts, the existing mix of businesses is already strong. In those Districts, recommendations such as increased marketing or infrastructure investments can further strengthen these areas.

Districts - Key Business Sectors

Cunningham Industrial
Delmar Gateway
Heman Park
International District
Millar Park
Olive Gateway
Olive Innovation
Pershing-Forsyth
U City Loop
West Delmar

Initial Implementation Process

- Recovery From COVID: Retail sector focus groups and business survey
 - (Also sets a baseline for “measuring business friendliness”)
- Outreach to businesses in Novus footprint
- Washington University: Key Early Discussions
 - Results of fiscal impact analysis
 - City’s redevelopment desires for West Loop and Olive
- Focus on Olive: Marketing of City-owned property on Olive Blvd.
- List City-owned property with a commercial broker

Ongoing Implementation Process

- Discussions with existing tech firm on possible expansion
- Exploring U City’s promotion of Minority businesses

- Making business communications and materials available in multiple languages
- Leveraging new Planning Department software to expedite development review and approval process
- On-going communication with Corps of Engineers on flood mitigation study and impacts to the development on Olive Blvd.
- Adoption of the Draft by City Council

Tracking Progress

The Economic Development Strategy includes a set of recommended metrics for each of the principles to track and reevaluate progress over time.

- Implemented by staff and City Council

Mr. Cross stated moving forward the goal is to meet with the Plan Commission about re-initiating the visioning process and moving forward with the new Comprehensive Plan. This Strategic Plan will play a very important role in the evaluation and drafting of this guiding document.

Staff has received training on the new Planning Department software, which provides for a more user-friendly public portal and efficiency tool to better assist businesses. The goal is to mirror the Department's current software with the new software prior to its official launch.

Councilmember Smotherson stated a vast majority of the information contained in the Draft Plan is things the City was already aware of. But what he appreciates is that this plan has taken that information and put it into a format that provides the City with guidance and direction. And with respect to tracking the progress being made he honestly believes an Economic Development Commission should be created to assist staff and Council in analyzing the metrics.

He then asked what should be the City's next priority if the Olive/1-70 Development moves forward as planned? Mr. Ibendahl stated the City's interests should be to the east of the development, all the way down to Kingsland and the Olive Innovation District, with a focus on revitalizing the tech sector. And it should also take advantage of the Heman Park area which is a great location for new residential housing that would support neighborhood retail. He stated while he would not necessarily rank either of these priorities as being more important than the other, neither are actually dependent on what happens with NOVUS, so the City could move forward with some of these initiatives concurrently in the near and intermediate-term.

Councilmember Clay asked if the prioritization of the action items for implementation was based on what was needed the most or what was more achievable in the short-term? Mr. Ibendahl stated prioritization is both an art and a science, but in this case, it tends to focus more on achievable priorities. Some they viewed as low-hanging fruit, and others, while more important, would require more time to accomplish.

Ms. Davis stated as they started to rank these priorities and place timelines on them, they also looked at two other variables; staffing and the capacity to actually be able to undertake some of the recommendations.

Councilmember Clay stated he noticed there was a reframing of Olive from the 2009 Plan, which breaks Olive up into four sections. But this Plan has added Millar Park into that sector. Could you elaborate on this particular change? Mr. Ibendahl stated the 2009 Plan was developed around design standards and did not include an economic strategy component. However, in some ways, it was on the right track. Looking at the Plan ten years later, the Planning Team thought it needed more refinement because some of the concepts were no longer applicable.

He stated they saw Cunningham Industrial as a growing tech sector and the chance for mixed-use on Olive predicated the need to have something else adjacent to that area. And the same is true with the International District because you want to leverage the strength of these Districts to draw-in more

businesses. So, the purpose of adding Millar Park, with its combination of businesses and residential, was to show a north/south connection across Olive, which they felt was very important.

Councilmember Clay stated his colleague has been advocating for a long time that the industrial corridor be less visible because of the types of businesses that operate there. So he thinks the segmentation provided in the Economic Development Strategy makes a lot of sense.

Mayor Crow stated he is always interested to know the outcome of endeavors utilizing community engagement. So, would you say U City had a typical, good or poor participation rate? Mr. Ibendahl stated this was more of a structured engagement process as opposed to open meetings that are typically utilized in the development of a Comprehensive Plan. He stated economic development principles are a little bit harder for folks to get excited about, which is why they used the Task Force as their primary engagement tool. However, before COVID there were numerous one-on-one and small group meetings with a cross-section of business owners and stakeholders. And overall, they heard a lot of positive things in terms of the Economic Development Strategy being on track.

Mayor Crow stated the Plan talks about U City's opportunities related to senior housing. Is this in addition to the housing that U City already has available, and if so, what are you suggesting? Mr. Ibendahl stated because U City has such a strong core they mentioned the potential for residential growth on Olive near Heman Park that could be more senior-oriented. Of course, senior housing is comprised of a pretty broad spectrum. On one end you have the independent, active group that wants to take advantage of a city's art and entertainment venues. And on the other end, you have assisted living and skilled care. But there are a lot of strengths for the City to pursue with active, independent senior housing.

Councilmember McMahon stated it sounds like the Plan is suggesting that the City maintain The Loop as it is, and to increase the tech sector and vitality through creative marketing and branding. But although it sounds like The Loop already has a good brand, couldn't that assumption be challenged given the number of vacancies, construction, and reduced traffic as a result of COVID? And if it can be challenged, what should be the target or direction the City should be heading in? Mr. Ibendahl stated the Plan does talk about maintaining The Loop but it also talks about the importance of having target redevelopment or development in the West Loop area. There has been a lot of new development further east outside of the City limits, so new development along the western end would help provide a better anchor. He stated there have also been some recent openings in terms of the Tech Working Center on Kingsland, and it will be extremely important to refresh the public realm in the Loop; without too much disturbance to the process, with some infrastructure enhancements. So it's more than just maintaining and marketing, it's a mix of several factors.

Mr. Rose stated the Loop Special Business District is going through its own economic development strategy/visioning process, and two of the big issues that need to be addressed are; what to do with the Loop Trolley, and if there should be a stronger relationship between the U City Loop and the St. Louis Loop. He stated although the contract will not be addressed until their next meeting, he thinks their process is also going to be led by the I-5 Group. If so, that will provide connectivity and added value to the City's Economic Development Strategy.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Crow thanked Mr. Ibendahl and his team for joining Council this evening and adjourned the Study Session at 6:15 p.m.

LaRette Reese
City Clerk