



Hall County Regional Planning Commission

Wednesday, December 05, 2007

Regular Meeting

Item F2

Amendment to Redevelopment Plans for CRA Areas #1, #4 and #6

Concerning an amendment to the generalized redevelopment plans for CRA Areas #1, #4 and #6 in the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, in accordance with Section 18-2115 Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, Nebraska Community Development Act, as amended. Specific amendments to be considered are participation of the CRA with the City in creating Quiet Zones and paying for Quiet Zone Improvements at rail crossings in Area #1, #4 and #6. (C-8-2008GI) (Hearing, Discussion, Action)

Staff Contact: Chad Nabity

November 27, 2007

From: Chad Nabity, AICP Director

To: Regional Planning Commission

Re: Amendments to Redevelopment Plans for CRA Areas 1, 4 and 6.

Overview

Enclosed you will find a copy of an amendment to the generalized redevelopment plans for CRA Areas 1, 4 and 6. These areas have been declared blighted and substandard by the Grand Island City Council. The Community Redevelopment Authority considered these amendments at their meeting on November 14, 2007 and forwarded them to the Regional Planning Commission for review and recommendation.

The enclosed amendments were prepared by the CRA Director.

The amendments would specify quiet zone improvements along the Union Pacific Rail Road as a means to eliminate conditions contributing to the blighted and substandard status of these areas. Improvements are to be considered at 6 intersections within the blighted and substandard areas.

It is not proposed that TIF would be used for these projects. The CRA would spend tax dollars from its annual collection to participate with the City in these improvements over a two year period.

As this is a Redevelopment Plan, the Planning Commission is examining the plan for conformance to the Comprehensive Plan for the City. The only improvements these amendments would authorize are those necessary to declare quiet zones along the UPRR tracks. The 2004 Comprehensive Plan specifically identifies these improvements as a goal for the City in Transportation Objective 8.03.01.

The process for approval of the redevelopment plan is as follows:

- CRA sends the plan to the Planning Commission for Review and Recommendation
- Planning Commission has 30 days to hold a public hearing and review the plan for consistency with the City's comprehensive plan and make a recommendation back to the CRA
- CRA Approves/adopts the plan by Resolution and forwards the plan to Council for final approval
- City Council holds a Public Hearing and approves the plan by resolution

Recommendation

Staff is recommending that the Hall County Regional Planning Commission recommend approval of these amendments. Findings relative to conformance with the Grand Island Comprehensive Plan should be included in the recommendation.

Grand Island Redevelopment Plan Railroad Corridor Noise Abatement In CRA Areas Number 1, 4 and 6 November 1, 2007

Introduction

This plan focuses on noise issues associated with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) as it crosses Grand Island through Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) Areas 1, 4 and 6 from Broadwell Avenue on the west to Oak Street on the east. Figure 1 identifies 6 at grade crossings between the Union Pacific Railroad and Grand Island City Streets that are in CRA Areas. The Grand Island CRA is considering appropriating money allocated under the budget heading Other Projects toward:

1. either the purchase and installation of wayside horns at some or all of these crossings;
2. or toward physical improvements to the crossings that would result in removing the necessity for any horn to sound at the intersection other than during emergency conditions.

Existing Conditions

Blight and Substandard Declaration

The six crossings are completely contained within CRA Areas 1, 4 and 6. The Areas have been declared blighted and substandard by the Grand Island City Council and are entirely within the Corporate Limits of the City of Grand Island.

Existing Land Use and Condition of Properties

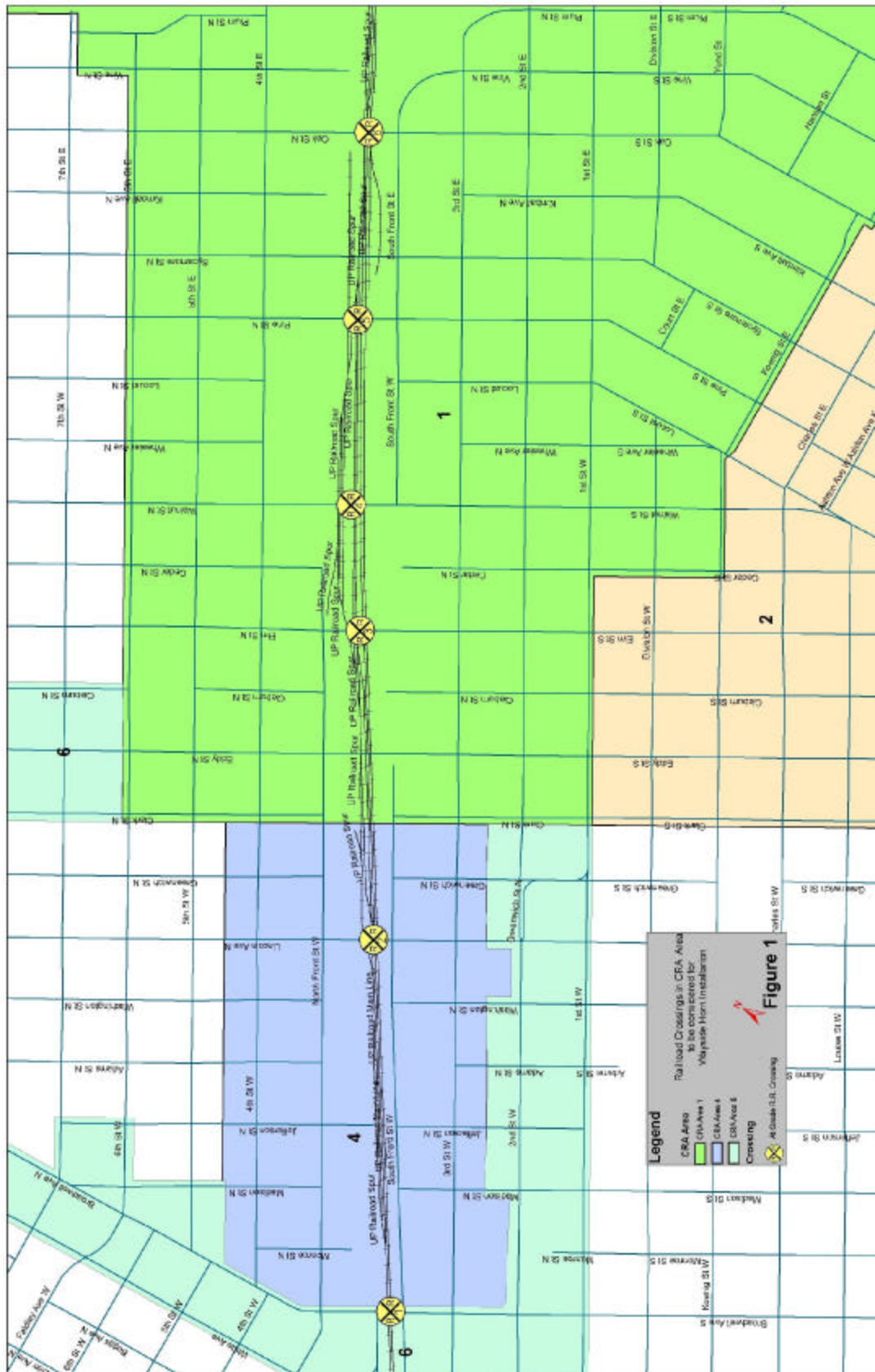
All of the property involved in the proposed redevelopment plan for these 6 crossings would be located either within railroad right-of-way or city street right-of-way and used for transportation purposes. In October of 2007, the UPRR upgraded the southerly track with concrete ties, constant warning circuitry and continuous rails. Figure 2 identifies the existing land use of the properties around the crossings under consideration for improvements.

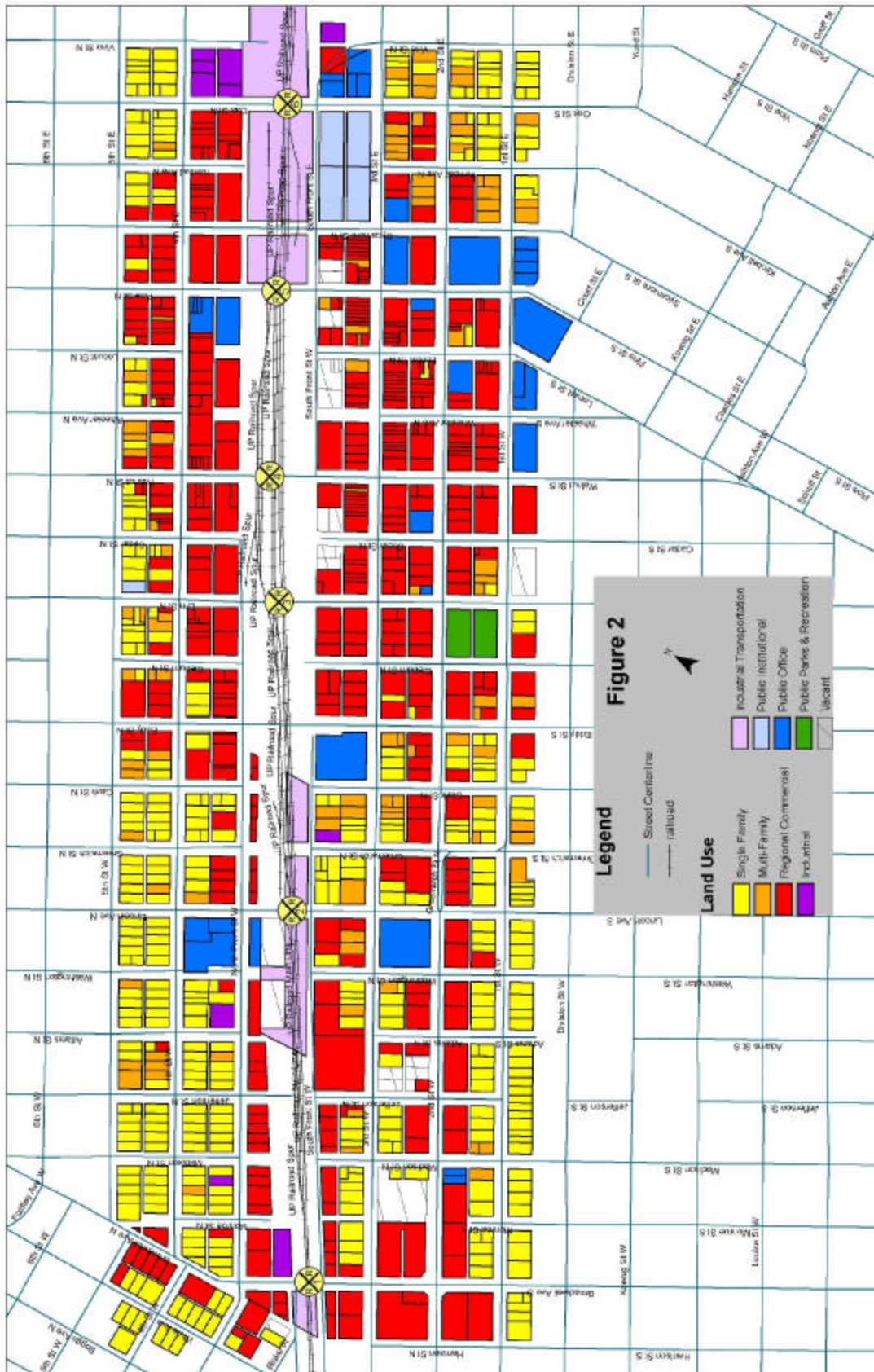
Necessary Property Acquisition

No acquisition of private property will be required to implement this redevelopment plan. Closure of accesses to private property may be necessary to eliminate the necessity to sound horns at the crossings in some places. This is most likely on the south side of the crossings at Elm, Walnut and Oak.

Issues with Train Noise

The UPRR sends more than 80 trains per day over the tracks that nearly bisect the city. That is an average of 1 train every 18 minutes. Train traffic is expected to continue to increase. UPRR





representatives have recently been quoted in the Grand Island Independent at least twice stating that more than 100 trains per day use those tracks.

CRA Areas 1, 4 and 6 are immediately adjacent to the tracks. The noise of the trains is an environmental disincentive to investment in the area. CRA Area 1 includes the downtown business district. The downtown business district is currently trying to:

- Attract niche businesses
- Increase the number of downtown residences,
- Create a distinct sense of place for the downtown area,
- Define itself as an arts and entertainment center,
- Attract office uses that complement the existing government center, and
- Renovate historic buildings

At the current daily number of trains, the train noise makes it difficult to conduct business when a train is passing through the area. With the continued increase in rail traffic, this issue is only going to get worse and weaken the market and marketability of properties close to the tracks for office or residential uses.

Comprehensive Plan

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Grand Island included input from a variety of subcommittees as part of the planning process including one focusing on transportation related issues. Transportation Objective 8.03.01 from the 2004 comprehensive plan specifically calls for the installation of directional railroad horns that direct sound down the street.

Projected Costs

Wayside Horn Areas

The anticipated cost to purchase and install wayside horns is \$33,000 for each horn and an additional \$16,500 for installation and utilities. Installing a horn on each side of the tracks at a crossing is estimated to cost approximately \$99,000. Figure 3 shows the typical installation of the wayside horns to provide the appropriate decibel level 100 feet from the tracks.

No Horn Areas

No horn areas may be possible at some intersections if driveways and other access points of 100 feet away from the crossing and raised medians are installed to discourage people from driving around the crossing arms when they are down. The cost of creating no horn area would be less than the cost of purchasing and installing wayside horns but it will not be possible to use no horn areas at every intersection.

Based on the current figures the total cost to purchase and install wayside horns or to create quiet zones at all six crossings is \$480,000. These improvements are public improvements and could be financed through tax increment financing (TIF) if they could be tied into a suitable project.

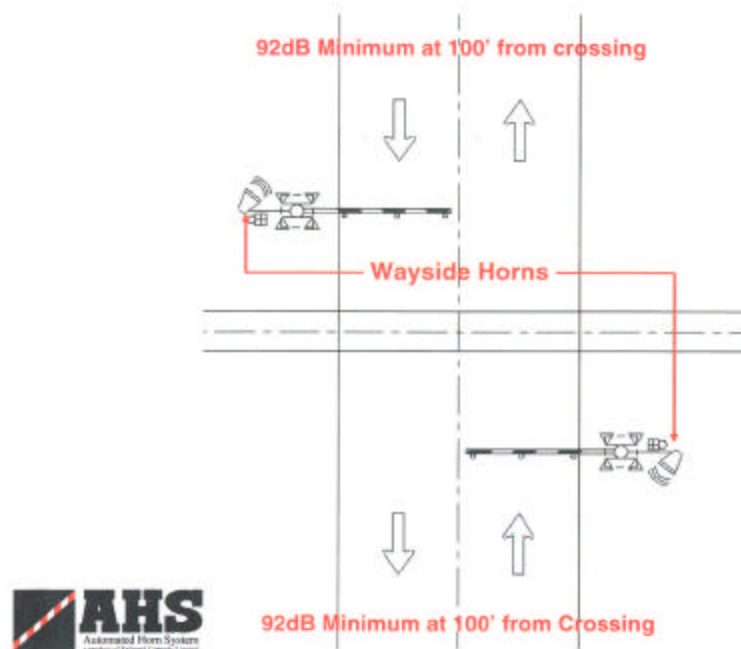


Figure 3 Typical Wayside Horn Installation

Budgeting

It is suggested that the CRA set aside up to \$140,000 for the 2008 fiscal year and up to \$100,000 for the 2009 fiscal year toward this project. A proposed budget for the project by crossing and improvement is shown on Table 1. Money is available in the 2008 fiscal year under the category of Other Projects within the adopted budget for the CRA. The remaining funds should come from other sources including the City of Grand Island. Based on these figures and with similar participation by the City all of the crossings between Webb Road on the west and Oak Street on the east could be treated with either a wayside horn area or a no horn area.

Table 1 Estimated Cost Improvements for Quiet Zones at Identified UPRR Crossings					
Crossing Number	Street		Solution	Cost with Installation	Cost per Crossing
1	Broadwell	North Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	\$99,000
		South Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	
2	Lincoln	North Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	\$99,000
		South Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	
3	Elm	North Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	\$60,500
		South Side	Median	\$11,000	
4	Walnut	North Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	\$60,500
		South Side	Median	\$11,000	
5	Pine	North Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	\$99,000
		South Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	
6	Oak	North Side	Wayside Horn	\$49,500	\$60,500
		South Side	Median	\$11,000	
				Total	\$478,500

Interlocal Agreement

An interlocal agreement should be drafted and approved between the CRA and the City of Grand Island to define the terms of participation in this project prior to beginning the project.

Timeline

November 15, 2007	CRA Considers Redevelopment Plan Amendment
December 5, 2007	Planning Commission Considers Redevelopment Plan Amendment
December ?, 2007	CRA Recommends Council Approve Redevelopment Plan Amendment and approves Interlocal Agreement.
January 8, 2008	City Council Approves Redevelopment Plan Amendment and Interlocal Agreement with CRA.
February 2008	City Council approves agreement for Consulting Engineer to prepare plans and bid specifications.
April 2008	Approve Agreement with NDOR for Quiet Zone Project.
May 2008	Update Diagnostic Review of Crossings.
June 2008	Update National Inventory to reflect existing conditions.
June 2008	Submit Notification of Intent to create Quiet Zone.
June 2008	Submit Quiet Zone plans to the Union Pacific Railroad for approval.
July 2008	Open Bids for the project - Including construction of medians and purchase/installation of horns
Fall 2008	Installation of Supplemental Safety Measures for crossings at Elm, Walnut, Pine and Oak Streets.
Fall 2008	Update National Inventory to reflect existing conditions.
Fall 2008	Submit notification, silence train horns and install signage at all crossings.
Fall 2009	Installation of Supplemental Safety Measures for crossings at Broadwell Avenue and Lincoln Street. Custer Street outside of the area would also be considered at this time.
Fall 2009	Update National Inventory to reflect existing conditions.
Fall 2009	Submit notification, silence train horns and install signage at all crossings.

Anticipated Conditions After Redevelopment

Landuse

It is not anticipated that the installation of the wayside horns would significantly alter the land uses or land coverage in the redevelopment area. This area is already largely developed. The reduction in noise due to this project should encourage reinvestment in the area and positively impact property values. Other redevelopment projects are more likely to occur because of this project but those projects would be reviewed separately.

Impact to Downtown

This corridor will continue to function the way the Downtown has functioned for the past 20 years. Primary uses will be office and specialty retail with some housing. Population densities in the Downtown area may increase as these changes would remove one barrier (train horn noise) to second and third story residential development in the downtown area. The Comprehensive Plan and current zoning ordinance supports higher population densities in the Downtown area.

Changes to Regulations and Public Infrastructure

No changes would be anticipated to street layouts or grades; other public infrastructure (outside of the addition of the wayside horns to the public infrastructure; or to the current zoning regulations based on this project.