



# **City of Grand Island**

**Tuesday, June 07, 2005**

**Study Session**

## **Item -1**

**Discussion Concerning Community Redevelopment Authority  
(CRA) Organization**

Staff Contact: Gary Greer, Chad Nabity

# **Council Agenda Memo**

**From:** Gary Greer, City Administrator  
**Meeting:** June 7, 2005  
**Subject:** CRA Organization  
**Item #'s:** 1  
**Presenter(s):** Chad Nabity, Regional Planning Director

## **Background**

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005 the City Council approved Ordinance 8954 which changed the section of the Code that relates to the management of the Community Redevelopment Authority. Section 2-123 now reads: "The City Administrator shall designate a person to serve as the Director and Ex Officio Secretary of the Community Redevelopment Authority, and that person shall perform such duties as may be assigned by the Authority, including necessary administrative functions described in Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 18-2102.01."

Over the last few months several alternatives have been considered for the management of the CRA. It has been the goal of City Administration to leverage the CRA funding to the highest level in order to create the most return for the communities dollars. Also, the City would like to streamline processes and allow those interested in developing projects to have an efficient and effective way to approach the CRA.

## **Discussion**

Attached is a proposal that City Administration is recommending for the management of the Community Redevelopment Authority. Chad Nabity, Regional Planning Director will be on hand to present the proposal to the City Council. Additionally, the CRA members have been given a copy of the proposal and are invited to the joint study session.

## **Conclusion**

The City Council and CRA are asked to review the proposal, take public input, ask questions and make suggestions to enhance the proposed plan to manage the CRA. After the study session, City Administration will appoint a CRA Director and an agreement which will guide the process in the future.

**A Proposal from the Regional Planning Department to assume the management  
duties and staffing of the Grand Island Community Redevelopment Authority**

For

Gary Greer

Grand Island City Administrator

May 22, 2005

Presented by

Chad Nabity, AICP  
Hall County Regional Planning Director

Joni Kuzma  
Grand Island Community Development Specialist

And

Marsha Kaslan  
Grand Island Community Development Administrator

## **The Regional Planning Department**

The Hall County Regional Planning Department was created through an interlocal agreement in 1968 by the City of Grand Island, Hall County, and the Villages of Alda, Cairo, Doniphan, Park View and Wood River. The Department is responsible for the development, maintenance, and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, administration of the development review process, and administration of land use regulations established by the member entities. The Department reviews and processes all development proposals and provides direct support to the: Public, Planning Commission, Grand Island City Council and Staff, Hall County Board of Supervisors and Staff, Wood River City Council and Staff, and Cairo, Doniphan, and Alda Village Boards and Staff.

### **Community Development Division**

The Community Development Department began in Grand Island in the mid 1970's as a federal program concentrating on urban renewal. Many large scale projects including purchasing properties that were eventually used for the American Red Cross building and the YMCA were part of that program. As the urban renewal program was phased out and community development block grants (CDBG) replaced the urban renewal programs the Community Development Department was moved into the City as a city function. In 2001 the Community Development Department was folded into the Community Projects Department along with the public information office, downtown development and the Community Redevelopment Authority. The Community Projects Department was reorganized in October of 2003 when the CRA and management of the Business Improvement Districts moved with Cindy Johnson who was the Community Projects Director to the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce. In March of 2004, the Community Projects Department was completely reorganized and the Community Development Division was added to the Regional Planning Department.

Community Development applies for and administers grants to assist with housing and infrastructure improvements in the CDBG Project Area, and for economic development projects in the community. Housing activities include down payment assistance, owner-occupied and rental housing rehabilitation, voluntary acquisition, homesteading, development assistance, and clearance and demolition of dilapidated structures. Infrastructure activities include street paving, storm sewer and water line installation, and sidewalk replacement and installation. Economic Development activities include expanding the state's economic base, creating quality jobs for persons in the low-to-moderate income category, and providing economic opportunities for low-to-moderate wage earners.

### **Staffing**

The planning department currently employs 5 people in full time positions. The Planning Director and Planning Secretary positions are funded 50% each by the city and county. The Planning Technician position is funded 31% each by the City and County and 38%

by the Grand Island Utilities Department. Both Community Development positions are funded solely by the City.

#### **Staff**

Planning Director

Planning Technician

Community Development Administrator

Planning Secretary

Community Development Specialist

### **How does the Community Redevelopment Authority fit into the Hall County Regional Planning Department?**

The State of Nebraska recognizes a statutory link between the planning commission and the Community Redevelopment Authority. Blight and Substandard studies and redevelopment plans must be reviewed by the Planning Commission for compliance with the comprehensive plan prior to adoption by the Council.

Regional Planning is already integrally involved with planning and redevelopment of the community. Many of the goals of the recently updated comprehensive plan deal with redevelopment issues. The Planning Commission has recommended and the City Council has approved a comprehensive development plan that includes redevelopment of older, blighted and/or underutilized areas of the city as a primary focus for improving the community.

The Regional Planning Department is regularly involved in issues involving extension of infrastructure to areas of the community. This includes both developed and undeveloped areas. Zoning and subdivision regulations are written in such a way as to discourage development or redevelopment of property without proper infrastructure and, in many cases, these regulations require the development of proper infrastructure for the development or redevelopment of property. The CRA can encourage development or redevelopment by concentrating on either replacing substandard infrastructure or building new infrastructure in areas designated for redevelopment.

### **How does the Community Redevelopment Authority fit into the Community Development Division?**

The Community Development mission is “To enhance the quality of life in Grand Island by building partnerships with citizens to consistently provide services that meet the growing needs of the community.”

The Community Development Division would be a good partner with Regional Planning in carrying out the purposes and programs of the CRA. The incorporation of the CRA would allow the Community Development Division to appropriately identify and address building issues and needs, address improvements to land, buildings, streets, utilities,

parks, sidewalks, lighting, skywalks and many other public-related areas, and to provide Tax Increment Financing to selected, eligible redevelopment projects.

Community Development has been a strong past partner with the CRA in collaboration on the following projects:

- Upper Level Development Downtown                      \$5,000 grant and interest buy-down on \$17,000  
219 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.
- Single Family Housing Development                      \$100,000  
Lincolnview Estates, 9<sup>th</sup> and Lambert
- Multifamily Housing Development                      TIF  
415 S Cherry St. (120 Units)
- Other complementing projects include:
  - Contribution of \$26,500 to Senior Center for infrastructure
  - Demolition of Bill's Trading Post, 7<sup>th</sup> & Plum; 419 N. Vine; 805 E. 9<sup>th</sup> and other substandard structures in the CDBG project area
  - Demolition of substandard housing, which was replaced by new and Down payment provided by Community Development for first time home buyer
  - Cited matching funds from the CRA in Community Development Block Grant application for demolition and acquisition grant project
  - \$5,000 match provided by CRA for Community Development, 2000 Housing Study Planning Grant
  - Working to establish a housing advocate position to work as liaison between renters/landlords and landlords/renters
  - Community Development acts as grant administrator for Economic Development grants, which are often co-funded through TIF or with infrastructure and/or façade improvement.

In addition, portions of several CRA redevelopment areas overlap with the existing CDBG Project Area and will overlap with the area that will be designated in the 2006-2008 Community Revitalization project.

The Community Development Division is already familiar with obtaining and securing affordable housing for the residents of Grand Island in the CDBG Project area in northeast Grand Island. In May, the Division was awarded a Comprehensive Revitalization grant through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to

“develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, particularly for low and moderate-income persons.” This grant encompasses the following possible activities

- Infrastructure revitalization coordinated with potential projects of the City of Grand Island Public Works and Utilities Departments. These may include improvements, replacements and repairs to streets, electrical lines, water/storm sewer/sanitary sewer distribution lines, drainage improvements and sidewalk installation or repair.
- Housing revitalization which may include funding for first-time homebuyers through down payment assistance, owner-occupied rehabilitation; lead-based paint inspections; purchase of MUD homes for resale to low-to-moderate income homebuyers; and acquisition or demolition of substandard housing.
- Public facilities revitalization, which may include updates to existing community meeting facilities or construction of tornado-safe shelters

The Community Development Division has the capacity from past experience and training to assist with tasks of the CRA and benefit the City of Grand Island to reduce duplication of services and to serve the citizens of Grand Island. Community Development is a fully funded division of Regional Planning and is capable of facilitating the programs of the CRA as a function of the City using property tax dollars.

### **Where Would the CRA fit in the Regional Planning Department?**

The CRA would be the direct responsibility of the Planning Director. The Director is already the initial public contact, provides staff support and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Planning Director would be responsible for working with the public on a day to day basis and for writing staff reports for the members of the CRA. Support would come primarily from the Planning Secretary. The Planning Secretary is currently responsible for taking minutes, and handling correspondence and legal notices for the planning commission. The Planning Secretary would be responsible for those same items for the Community Redevelopment Authority.

For the first year we are estimating that 10% of the salary and benefits of the Planning Director as well as 10% of the salary and benefits of the Planning Secretary would be covered by the CRA. This represents approximately ½ day per week of work devoted solely to the CRA by both individuals. Based on the present salaries and benefits for the Director and Secretary it is estimated that this would cost \$15,000 or less. The final amount would be determined with the approval of the Planning Department and CRA budgets. This would have to be reevaluated on an annual basis to insure that both the Planning Department and the CRA are adequately staffed.

The CRA is currently paying for expenses: copies, postage, legal notices, training etc... directly to the Chamber of Commerce. The CRA would continue to pay these expenses only to the City of Grand Island general fund.

The Community Development division would provide additional support as needed to leverage the benefits of the CRA to their maximum potential. Community Development

has the authority and ability to access federal and foundation funds that can be used to complement the work of the CRA. The CRA has local tax dollars and the ability to use both eminent domain and tax increment financing to achieve the goals of the redevelopment plans. Closer ties between community development and the CRA can only result greater benefits to the constituents of both agencies.

## **Conclusion**

The activities of the CRA dovetail neatly into the current activities of the Regional Planning Department and its Community Development Division. Many communities in Nebraska combine the elements of planning, community development and community redevelopment into a single department. Moving the CRA into the Regional Planning Department would be moving it home.

The Planning Department and the comprehensive plan are rooted in the creation of the community we, as people of Grand Island, desire for tomorrow through our actions today. The Community Redevelopment Authority has the tools and authority to recreate the community of yesterday into the community of today and tomorrow. Combining Regional Planning and the CRA under a single umbrella strengthens the missions of both entities.