



**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Sam Davis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will Brennan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Tameika Isaac Devine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Review of Student Housing Incentives - Mr. Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director

Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director recalled that the consensus from the last meeting was not to fully discontinue the incentivize for student housing projects. There are concerns with over-saturation. How do we raise the bar and include more benefit with those specific types of projects? The goal for today’s discussion is to receive more clarity. We need a clear definition of student housing projects? What are the additional criteria and benchmarks? Is there a percentage of affordable housing that we want to require? Are there conditional requirements for developers? Consider what we need and other options we want. Once we have this information, we can put forward a specific recommendation for Council to adopt. I also wanted feedback on fee sharing, specifically the cost to serve when it comes to police and fire. Student housing projects are different from multifamily projects. Student housing projects lease by the bed and multi-family projects lease by the unit. In some cases, student housing projects exceed three bedrooms per unit. Student housing is marketed as such and lease periods align with college enrollment periods. What would you consider as criteria for separating the projects?

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine said leasing by the bed clearly distinguishes the types of projects that are intended for students. We need to look at density as well.

Councilor Sam Davis said the number of beds seem to be the most common descriptor of student housing.

Councilor Will Brennan concurred. Providing exemptions in the past to rent by the bed for more than three bedroom units is something that needs to be looked at. Our code enforcement calls for a maximum of three unrelated individuals living together. We need to give our zoning and code enforcement [staff] more resources.



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Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we are good with using the term “leases by the bed” to define student housing projects. Other options for consideration include a percentage of affordable/workforce housing and a strict limit on public parking spaces. Project Catawba included a layer of items. Nice value adds include pedestrian safety; retail, office, and restaurant space; energy efficiency improvements; safety improvements; brownsfields remediation; public parks and greenfield space; and supporting local neighborhoods and/or business associations.

Councilor Will Brennan said in national case studies, municipalities our size and larger trend upwards to 30% of the total units being dedicated to affordable and workforce housing. I strongly support that being a major driver for any developer looking to qualify for a tax break. What other benefits can you bring to the projects? How will you interact with the neighborhood? How can we work property management into this?

Councilor Sam Davis said onsite management is the best model for creating a good relationship with surrounding property owners and the neighborhood as opposed to someone being away on-call. I don’t know if it should be required, but it needs to be a part of the conversation. We also have to consider the local impact of a development on the existing area. We don’t want anyone to experience culture shock.

Teresa Wilson, City Manager added that whether it is student housing, market rate, or Columbia Housing, the time to capture these developers and their adherence to a certain type of management is at the onset of the project. We have noticed that relationships with the developments and those onsite has become more critical. During COVID, we were seeing certain behaviors at some of the student housing projects and what our law enforcement and fire marshals had to get involved in was unacceptable. We need that type of acknowledgement as to what they are going to be held accountable to on the front end. A public safety presence has become more necessary and what can private developers bring to the table on the front end to assist with our law enforcement infrastructure in neighboring communities. There needs to be a stronger relationship on the front end and expectation for it to be maintained for the duration.

Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said those are great points that we need to weave into the overall discussion and consider if it is done by resolution, ordinance, or a memorandum of agreement. How do we quantify how public safety needs are being met? Do you want workforce housing to be a requirement?



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Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine said it needs to be included in the conversation, but it will look different based on the development. Other cities have done a percentage of workforce housing and/or an investment into the city's affordable housing programs. It may be strongly encouraged and the details of a particular arrangement can be added to the agreement.

Councilor Will Brennan said other municipalities have allowed developers to either buy in or buy out and they have a tiered incentive rebate as well. I believe that zoning was a part of it. I suggest looking at the area median income (AMI) approach.

Councilor Tameika Isaac Devine agreed to discuss this with the affordable housing task force and to conduct additional research.

Councilor Davis said we can have one or two different models to get what we want. We could have a development without income requirements but with affordable price ranges.

Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said it's fair to ask developers to meet our requirements and provide at least two out of six additional options to meet other objectives.

Councilor Will Brennan agreed to connect Ryan with NLC University staff to receive feedback or suggestions on a good structure.

Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said we will craft language and build a model based on today's feedback. There have been conversations around requesting additional financial resources to support additional fire and police costs. The breakout is set by county council on a pro-rata basis. The multi-county industrial park structures it out with about 1% going to Fairfield County. The county economic development gets a portion of that for their capital fund for infrastructure and acquisition. Then you layer the tax break on top of that and you are back at 50%: the city receives 17% and the county receives 20%. The school district receives the lion's share of student housing projects. A few years ago, there were discussions about reconsidering the school district's portion, but I don't think that went far. Once these are done, it is no longer a tax; it is transferred into a fee and county council decides how it is distributed.

Councilor Devine asked if there have been any official conversations with the county.

Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said I am willing to have the conversation with staff at the county. Other council members have expressed an interest in this as well.



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Councilor Will Brennan said we need our share to cover the cost of public safety initiatives. It is important to communicate with county council on that.

Councilor Sam Davis said as soon as we put meat on the bone, we will have more substance to add to the conversation with the county. Everybody is going to benefit but we need to make sure it meets our needs.

Ryan Coleman, Economic Development Director said there is more willingness to look at a model like this for student housing. I don't know if you can have the same conversation around mixed use and multi-family, in general. We can start drafting language for an amendment to the current resolution, research the workforce/affordable housing components, meet with the NLC contacts, seek feedback on how to proceed with the cost to serve, and bring a draft back in the next few weeks.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was closed at 11:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk