

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND**  
**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**  
City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor,  
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL

3/24/2025 - Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**2. Roll Call**

Mayor Thoms asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Alderpersons Randy Hurt, Randy Tweet, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos, Bill Healy and Mayor Mike Thoms.

Absent: Alderperson Moses Robinson.

Staff: City Manager Todd Thompson, Attorney Leslie Day, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

**3. Public Comment**

No one was signed up to speak.

**4. Presentations**

a. Strategic Housing Plan

Sarah Dott with PGAV Planners provided an overview of the presentation and discussed the project goals and key findings. She mentioned the project was data-informed and included strategies and recommendations for the next 10 years. She discussed the key findings that included: the City's architectural character and natural environment is not fully realized; it is important that the City intervenes earlier with deteriorating properties; and the Northeast Rock Island has the potential to offer increased walkability and bikeability.

Another key finding included exploring alternatives to the code requirement of fire sprinkler systems in new residential builds as Rock Island is the only City in the region that requires this system. She said the City will need to explore if there are other ways in which a similar level of fire safety can be achieved through fire - resistant building materials, etc.

Ms. Dott discussed other key findings, which included the need to improve trust between residents and City staff through engagement, increased transparency of City projects, programs and processes, and sharing of clear and consistent information with residents. She suggested updates to the City website, clearer documentation of processes, and checklists of required documentation to help everyone better navigate the process.

Ms. Dott said the study revealed that there is an immense shortage of housing opportunities for older residents and individuals with disabilities. There is also a need for off-campus housing for Augustana College students.

She discussed the final key finding, noting there is a significant amount of rent-restricted and subsidized affordable housing in Rock Island and there is some concern regarding the over-concentration of poverty.

Next, Ms. Dott discussed the strategy roadmap, which is to be used as a guide with the next steps to take for each of the key findings and recommendations. The strategic roadmap is divided into three categories: strategies for existing housing stock, strategies for new housing development, and strategies for shaping the City's narrative.

She remarked on the specific strategies for existing housing stock, which included continuing to move from reactive to proactive code enforcement, cross-departmental data collection and monitoring and stepping up support for maintenance and rehabilitation of homes.

The specific strategies for new housing development include ten specific priority sites targeted for new development, the development of a clear annexation policy, updated policies and procedures to make developing housing easier and stepping up support for local partners aligned with the City's housing goals.

Furthermore, Ms. Dott discussed the strategies for shaping the City's narrative. The primary focus should be updating the website, making residents and developers aware of resources and improving the perception of Rock Island through coordinated marketing and promotion.

Ms. Dott provided a map of priority sites and discussed level one and level two priority sites. Three primary areas were identified for consideration for future annexation and the City must create an annexation policy to serve as a guide when considering annexations in the future. The policy will assist in the evaluation of the financial impact and inform decision-making.

Ms. Dott discussed the important considerations that City leaders will need to undertake to proactively promote the sites. She said the City must think more strategically about messaging and communications as the image of Rock Island is key to demonstrating that the City is an approachable partner for progress.

She discussed the next steps, which included approval of the plan from the Planning and Zoning Commission, followed by City Council for approval at the April 14, 2025, meeting.

Ms. Dott clarified that the plan includes having mixed-use development, which includes buildings with commercial or retail on the first floor and residential housing on the top floors.

Alderman Parker remarked on the recent re-branding of the downtown by the Rock Island Downtown Alliance (RIDA) and said they would be an excellent partner to learn from and collaborate with on re-branding the City.

## **5. Adjourn**

- a. Motion: Motion to adjourn.
- VV Voice vote is needed.

MOTION:

Aldersperson Poulos moved to adjourn the Study Session; Aldersperson Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 6-0-1 voice vote. Aye: Poulos, Healy, Hurt, Tweet, Swanson, Parker. Nay: None. Absent: Robinson.

The meeting concluded at 5:54 p.m.

[MIN\_SIGNATURES]