

APPROVED MINUTES

**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE  
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING**

**MINUTES FOR AUGUST 28, 2017**

Chairman Rickard called the August 28, 2017 meeting of the Plan Commission to order at 7:01 p.m. and led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Rickard, Ms. Gassen, Ms. Hogstrom, Ms. Johnson,  
Mr. Kulovany, Mr. Maurer

**ABSENT:** Mr. Boyle, Mr. Quirk, Ms. Rollins, Ex. Officio members Davenport,  
Livorsi & Menninga

**STAFF:** Director of Community Development Stan Popovich  
Village Sr. Planner Rebecca Leitschuh

**VISITORS:** Scott Richards, 1130 Warren Avenue, Downers Grove

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 7, 2017 meeting**

Ms. Gassen moved, seconded by Mr. Kulovany to approve the minutes for the August 7, 2017 meeting.

Chairman Rickard noted in the last paragraph on page 2, the EIFS acronym should be corrected. In the fifth paragraph on page 3, a reference is made to a 25' drive-through "land," which should read "lane."

**AYES:** Ms. Gassen, Mr. Kulovany, Ms. Hogstrom, Ms. Johnson, Mr. Maurer,  
Ch. Rickard

**NAYS:** None

The Motion to approve the minutes as corrected passed 6:0.

Chairman Rickard explained that the Public Hearing on this Agenda is a continuation from the June 26, 2017 and August 7, 2017 meetings to consider updates to the Downtown development regulations.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**FILE 16-PLC 0019 (Continued from June 26, 2017 and August 7, 2017):** The purpose of this request is to consider updates to the downtown development regulations. Village of Downers Grove, Petitioner.

Community Development Director Stan Popovich noted that the Plan Commission's last meeting on this topic was held on August 7, 2017. He indicated that the intention of this meeting is to  
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finalize the Plan Commission's recommendations and report, and make its recommendation to the Village Council. He pointed out that in Staff's Memo to the Commission he summarized the Plan Commission's discussion in the previous meetings regarding bulk regulations, and historic preservation. He noted that two items require additional discussion so as to provide the Council with a clearer direction from the Plan Commission. The first concerns the density allowances in DE-1 and DE-2. In the Comprehensive Plan it is noted that these areas should have greater residential density to support the Core. He then displayed maps depicting both the DE-1 and DE-2 areas under consideration. As established in the Zoning Ordinance, a lower square footage equals a higher density. For example, allowing one unit per 800 square feet results in 54 units in a one-acre area. He requested discussion by the Commission as to what figure they would consider for the Core area in their recommendation. He referred to information provided in the Commissioners' packets showing the various developments in the general downtown area and the density of those developments.

Ms. Gassen noticed that in some of the communities Mr. Popovich referenced for comparison there is no density requirement. Mr. Popovich explained that some other communities measure density in different ways, such as floor area ratio, which refers to the size of the building and how many units are planned for that building. For example, with a 10,000 square foot lot and a floor area ratio of 2.5, a 25,000 square foot building could be constructed. The number of apartments in that building would be up to the developer.

Chairman Rickard said that regardless of what numbers are established for lot areas and densities, there may be other things that prevent reaching a specific number of units. Staff's opinion was that 800 was a good number for the Core with the logic that the edge areas would be where the bulk of the density occurred. Chairman Rickard said he thought a good number for all three areas would be to call the Core area 900, Edge-1 700, and Edge-2 800. That would average the 800 figure throughout the three zones.

Ms. Hogstrom said she likes those numbers as proposed because the 800 figure is ideal, as they want higher density in the downtown edge. The 3,000 square feet would decrease that and that is not the direction they want to go.

Ms. Gassen said since they are lowering the height in the buildings in the Core area it would result in a lower density than exists now. Mr. Popovich agreed saying that lowering the heights limits the available number of units for that area.

Chairman Rickard said that the 900 square feet equates to 48 units per acre, with Edge-1 at 62 units per acre at 700 square feet, and Edge-2 at 54 units per acre based on 800 square feet.

Mr. Kulovany said he likes what Naperville, Glen Ellyn and Wheaton have done. Downtown Naperville on a weekend evening is really vibrant. What the Village is trying to accomplish is to increase the number of people who want to walk to the downtown restaurants and shops. He thought the idea was to increase density, particularly in Edge-1. So he would go either with no density standards, or close to the Chairman's recommendations. He sees that as a reasonable compromise.

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Mr. Maurer said he would also agree with keeping it at 800 or above. There are a lot of units coming on line, and there will be a big difference when three of the buildings currently under constructions are completed and filled.

Mr. Popovich reviewed Chairman Rickard's proposed figures, with the Core area at 900 square feet per unit, Edge-1 at 700 square feet per unit, and Edge-2 at 800 square feet per unit. In response to Chairman Rickard, Mr. Popovich said that the Transition Area is handled through a floor area ratio of 2.5, and not square footage per unit.

There was consensus by the Commission members to the figures proposed by Chairman Rickard.

Mr. Popovich moved the discussion to the Design Guidelines and the Plan Commission's Recommendations. He asked for clarification as to the issues they are attempting to address in reviewing the Design Guidelines.

Mr. Kulovany recalled two issues, one being not enough citizen input early in the process, and the second whether the Village has the proper tools if a developer chooses to follow the Building Code rather than the Design Guidelines. Mr. Kulovany reiterated his thoughts expressed at the last meeting that he didn't think this should be a Plan Commission decision, but should rest with the elected Village Council. He thinks it is a more serious policy issue that should be determined by the elected officials.

Regarding insufficient citizen input, Mr. Popovich asked whether that referred to the development of the Design Guidelines or the implementation of the Design Guidelines. Mr. Kulovany said he thinks it refers to both, and he noted the amount of frustration that's been expressed about Main and Maple. People have expressed that they never hear about these developments until it's "too late." Meetings of the Plan Commission are published about important issues and only a few people attend. He said he also thinks that developers would like to have more input early on as he thinks they would like to be welcomed by the community. He thinks they have to at least consider providing a format that would allow earlier input. He is recommending that there be public discussion, and not to decide in advance what the foregone conclusion would be.

Mr. Popovich replied that what he is hearing is public participation, but asked if it is about the building design, regulations and appearance, or are they trying to get more public involved when a project is coming forward so they can comment on it. Design Guidelines tend to be very material oriented. Are they trying to get more people actively involved to see what is changing, or actively involved in designing buildings?

Mr. Kulovany responded it's actually more to review a mechanism where there is a review process earlier on that could be opened to the public before a developer invests a lot of money in plans at the schematic stage. He referenced the amount of frustration by the community about what Walgreens is proposing at 63<sup>rd</sup> and Woodward, and the Village and Staff had no tools to say "wait, if you could take your durable materials a little higher up we think that would be better for the Village." He noted that even the Village Council had nothing they could say about it as it was really up to Walgreens. Mr. Kulovany said his feeling is that the Staff and even the Village Council need more tools to be able to go back to a developer with guidelines that have more teeth in them, or some type of design review.

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Mr. Popovich asked are whether he was referring specifically to the downtown area or Village-wide. Mr. Kulovany said he's referring mostly to the downtown area and to catalyst sites.

Chairman Rickard said he sees several themes that people are concerned about in the downtown area. He said one of the complaints is lack of public input. People come to public hearings when developments are in the final engineering phase, and people feel as though everything is locked in and it is much more difficult to suggest changes at that point. People are trying to digest and consume a large, complicated proposal when they are often hearing about it for the first time. They are trying to understand the situation, don't have time to get their thoughts and questions together, and it often results in them getting aggravated. He also agrees that it would be nice to get some input, or at least get a look at a proposal earlier on, except he thinks another idea to consider is, instead of coming to the Plan Commission at the final engineering phase, there instead be an intermediate step. He said he wasn't recommending another committee or design review, but something similar to the Village Council's First Reading or Workshop sessions. A developer could come in with their application and preliminary site plans, floor plans, etc. They would not as yet have spent money for studies for traffic, civil engineering, stormwater, etc. That would introduce everybody to the project, and the public would start to get a wide view of it, similar to First Readings. It would give the developer some type of assurance moving forward once they obtain everyone's thoughts and comments on the concept, and there would not be any major bumps down the road. If there were comments, the developer would better be able to incorporate them at that level. He doesn't think it would add additional time to the petitioner, as it would be during their normal course of work. He thinks that is worth considering and would give everyone more time to get their heads around these proposals as well.

Mr. Popovich said that Staff has the ability to provide for neighborhood meetings. He asked if this is something the Plan Commission would want to consider in terms of mandating neighborhood meetings either prior to or after submittal to Staff to encourage public participation. Chairman Rickard said that would be helpful, but he is looking to find something that would allow the Commission members the ability to look at the proposal earlier as well. It would also give the petitioner a better opportunity to address the comments before completing their projects. This would be especially beneficial to the Commission for larger projects that are difficult to digest in the 72 hours they have to review a petitioner's proposal.

Ms. Johnson asked if the Chairman felt these sessions would be delivered by size of the project, and if so, what size is he considering.

Ms. Gassen agreed that Main and Maple was a lot to digest. She asked how much detail they are supposed to determine tonight, in terms of what projects should have early input. Mr. Popovich replied he wasn't looking for that, but just wanted to understand the issue brought forward. Ms. Gassen noted that she agreed that the issue of public input is one of the biggest complaints they are receiving, because the public generally sees the projects for the first time when they are pretty much finished. Often it's shocking to the public, and she thinks if they saw the proposals earlier it might help solve the problem.

Chairman Rickard said with regard to the actual Design Guidelines, he reviewed them and made several comments on them. When he finished, he realized how minor his comments were. He wasn't suggesting changes as much as further clarifying some items. He didn't find anything

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wrong with the Design Guidelines themselves. People seem to complain more about issues such as bulk, rather than the design itself. His comments were geared more toward base materials, durability, etc.

Ms. Gassen agreed that for the most part Design Guidelines are sufficient. They could review them to create different Guidelines for specific areas. She said that the Plan Commission doesn't typically refer to them and it might be useful if they referred to them more.

Mr. Kulovany said that almost every petitioner refers to the Comprehensive Plan and takes its direction from that. He's not sure that the Design Guidelines have the same depth and breadth to them. A document from 2008-2009 should be reviewed again. More specifically, he said there was a huge uproar about the Main and Maple building, specifically concerns about having 70' at the curb. Trammell Crow put one setback in. He said another later recommendation to the developer came from the Plan Commission for another setback, and the developer replied not when it comes up at the eleventh hour, because by the time the project comes to the Plan Commission, they already have \$115,000 invested. If this request for an additional setback came earlier on in the process, it would have been positively considered. The developer said that Glenview has many public meetings and input. He thinks this is up to the Village Council to determine whether this should be studied in more detail.

Mr. Maurer commented that he likes the way many of the Design Guidelines are written. The photographs show recognizable historic structures from Downers Grove and suggest that is the direction they want to go; however, there is nothing in the language that specifically calls out a style they must meet. He thinks they are dancing a fine line between what is planning and what is architectural design review. He cares greatly about both of those issues, but tends to think that their focus is less on the direct aesthetics than it is on how big and how much.

Mr. Kulovany agreed that it speaks more to the form than the architecture. He's not suggesting that they get in the business of architecture, because in some ways it might preclude some other great ideas from architects and developers. He thinks the Village has been fortunate in that it has had cooperative developers who want to be good neighbors. But there is also the scenario of the developer who doesn't particularly care about the Village's Guidelines, and constructs what they want. That is why he thinks these considerations should be looked at.

Mr. Popovich then referred to Mr. Kulovany's comment as to whether the Village and Staff have the proper tools at their disposal to enforce specific standards. Mr. Kulovany said that the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Historic Preservation took some time for thoughtful people to really discuss and examine the issue of historic preservation. He thinks that the Village is at a threshold with the opportunity to do that for possible downtown design through an Ad Hoc Committee.

Chairman Rickard agrees with that idea. He is comfortable with the Design Guidelines with some minor updates and leaving the process with Staff reviewing and interpreting the Guidelines. He thinks having another committee study whether it makes sense to get into binding architectural design is a big discussion and needs to happen. At this time he is comfortable with the process as it is.

Mr. Kulovany said the differential is that what happens downtown in the next 8-12 years will impact the way this Village looks for the next 50-100 years.

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Mr. Maurer agreed because they are talking about the big developments that will be there for a very long time.

Mr. Popovich then asked if the recommendation is to have someone study the Guidelines closer.

Chairman Rickard said for the Design Guidelines, he thinks where it talks about the base segment of the building design on page 7, he would add something like “base level building materials should be durable, requiring little maintenance, and withstand street level pedestrian traffic and abuse.”

Mr. Maurer added that maybe they can include a term such as “of a higher quality material” in addition to durable.

Mr. Popovich said he didn’t think they would be getting into specifics regarding the Guidelines, but instead asked the question as to whether it’s the application of the Guidelines or the Guidelines themselves. That is the primary question. They can always tweak the Guidelines. He asked whether the recommendation of the Commission is to review all the Design Guidelines, or the potential application of the Design Guidelines, or both, or neither.

Mr. Kulovany said he thinks the recommendation is both. The consensus seems to be that the Guidelines are good, but may need some tweaking. The overall issue of the kind of Village input, the tools available to Staff—he believes those issues require more study and perhaps an Ad Hoc Committee if the Village Council deems it wants to develop such a study.

Ms. Gassen asked whether Staff wanted specific recommendations on the Guidelines, and Mr. Popovich said those could be taken off line.

Chairman Rickard commented that suggestions made at the last meeting were to further explore the dynamics of regulations versus guidelines. He said what he is hearing is a consensus to stay with the Guidelines and not create any new regulations that are binding and might trigger some additional process. All Commission members agreed.

As for Historic Preservation, Mr. Popovich said that one comment was to provide more links to historic preservation tax credits on the website. He asked if there were any additional comments on any other items discussed at previous meetings.

Chairman Rickard said he had no further comments. The remainder of the Commission had no further comments.

Chairman Rickard then called upon anyone in the audience who wished to speak on the topic. He then swore the audience member in.

1.Scott Richards of 1130 Warren Avenue, Downers Grove (Oak Tree Towers) said he has lived in the Village for about fifteen years, and lived in Lombard prior to that. He said that a good point was raised in terms of trying to reach the citizens. Many times when he attends meetings the information is over his head. He mentioned living in Lombard because they are in a different type of governing with Districts, and the public being represented by the Trustee elected for their Plan Commission Meeting

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specific District. He felt it worked much better than the system in Downers Grove because people thought they were part of the process and could participate better. He thinks the citizens of Downers Grove don't attend because it's a done deal, or the Village is going to do what it wants to do and will not listen to the public input.

Mr. Richards said he feels as though Downers Grove's downtown is in jeopardy with all of the huge projects that are going on right now. It doesn't seem as though anyone really cares about protecting what the Village has or in trying to capitalize on what the Village has in terms of its historic heritage. It is an old town that has an interesting downtown with some stores that are worth going to. One town that excels is Geneva in that it has a variety of well-maintained stores, with a feeling of universal connection in appearance. He thinks Glen Ellyn and Hinsdale have those same qualities, while Downers Grove does not have that feeling. There is not much in Downers Grove's downtown to draw people in. There are gyms opening up, realtors opening up next door to each other taking up viable space that should be going for stores. Those businesses could be anywhere in a strip mall in town and they would do fine.

He says one example of his feelings of losing the downtown is the monster at Main and Maple and people are still asking how that got through. It overwhelms the downtown, and he can't believe the two buildings got passed. Another aspect in town is parking which is ridiculous anymore. He often gives up after going around the block several times to find a parking space. Most people moving into the new buildings will probably have two cars. It's frustrating, and yet they keep building, building and building big. He is not against development but doesn't understand the direction the Village is going with massive development in a three-block downtown area. He never sees enough attention paid to traffic impact on these projects. He doesn't understand why nobody in this town seems to worry about traffic generated by these buildings. Mr. Richards said he feels as though the developer is in the driver's seat in Downers Grove, and they are telling the Village what to do. He thinks that is wrong. This is their home and as residents they have a right to some input as to what is and what is not allowed. If a developer chooses to go somewhere else that's fine because the Village does not have to take the first thing that comes in for consideration. Other towns stand their ground. He would like to see our downtown saved. There is some architectural interest in the buildings. He believes a developer should work with the town and not against it. Developers leave once the money is in their pocket and residents live with what they've left behind. Tax dollars are important but should not be the only thing that decisions are based upon. The Village needs to be in the driver's seat again.

There being no further comments, Chairman Rickard closed the public hearing.



**Ms. Gassen moved with respect to 16-PLC-0019 that the Plan Commission forward the recommendations from Staff's Memo dated August 28, 2017, and include the new density figures and other suggestions noted at this meeting. Ms. Hogstrom seconded the Motion. All in favor. The Motion carried unanimously.**

Chairman Rickard noted that this might be Ms. Hogstrom's last meeting and he thanked her for her volunteer work for the Village. He wished her the best of luck.

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**Ms. Hogstrom moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Maurer.  
The Motion passed unanimously.**

Chairman Rickard adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tonie Harrington,  
Recording Secretary