

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**MINUTES  
OF A WORKSHOP DISCUSSION  
WITH THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE  
OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AND  
MEMBERS OF THE PLAN COMMISSION  
ON  
FEBRUARY 17, 2003  
AT THE VILLAGE HALL, COMMITTEE ROOM  
IN THE VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE**

On behalf of the members of the Plan Commission [Commission], Chairman Jirik, and on behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee [Committee] of the Economic Development Commission, Commissioner (Committee Chair) Riordan, began the discussions at 7:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** As this meeting was a workshop discussion, attendance was voluntary.

**PRESENT:** Members of the Plan Commission: Commission Chair Jirik, Commissioner Griesbaum, Commissioner Kahlke, Commissioner Matejczyk, Commissioner McCormick, Commissioner Waechtler  
Members of the Strategic Planning Committee: Committee Chair Riordan, Commissioner Chalberg, Commissioner Ryan

**STAFF**

**PRESENT:** Kenneth Rathje, Director of Planning Services  
Steve Rockwell, Director, Economic Development  
Joseph Skach, Director, Redevelopment  
Amanda Brown, Planning Services  
Lori Skotterud, Redevelopment Specialist/Planner  
Ginny Mindo, Economic Development Staff

**OTHER:** Thomas Sisul, Council Member

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 3, 2003**

Commission Chair Jirik requested if there was concurrence on the minutes from the workshop on February 3, 2003. The members of both Commissions concurred.

Committee Chair Riordan suggested beginning the meeting by reviewing the focus areas listed on the matrix and discussed to date the previous workshops. He also asked if this group was going to review suggestions for the wording reflected in the matrix. Mr. Skach responded that there were modifications as noted in brackets in the goal statements and noted that the group previously agreed with coming back to refine the final verbiage in the future. Commission Chair Jirik agreed that it would be better to get through the focus areas first and refine exact wording later.

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### 75TH AND FAIRVIEW AVENUE / 63<sup>RD</sup> AND WOODWARD

It was agreed that discussions would continue with the next focus area on the discussion order listing. Mr. Skach began a discussion on the 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview Avenue stating that both Redevelopment and the Strategic Planning Committee felt that this site is a gateway location to the Village along the 75<sup>th</sup> Street Commercial Corridor. Mr. Rathje noted that it was a commercial component of a primarily residential planned development that had single family and multiple family condominiums with this separate commercial element. He added that it is a development that is doing very well with an aggressive management company that is in for the long-term. Mr. Waechtler brought up the fact that the restaurant at that site has turned over quite a few times. Mr. Rathje agreed, noting the former owners (of the Monical Pizza Company) didn't understand the Chicago pizza market. Currently, there is a family-run La Mex Restaurant, which is doing well.

Mr. Skach then asked the Joint Commission members to consider if they were comfortable with the way this site is dispositioned now and do they feel that it would take care of itself over the long-term without assistance. Mr. Skach noted that the Strategic Planning group had discussed that this site could potentially be an office-based mixed-use designation, which could be an opportunity for office-transitional type of mixed-use adjacent to residential versus traditional commercial retail in this particular case. Mr. Rathje said that this could cause a significant loss in retail sales tax if it was office. There was concurrence that this site should remain fundamentally retail based. Committee Chair Riordan also questioned if the north side of 75<sup>th</sup> Street was supposed to be higher density residential [orange; 6-11 DU/AC.] on the Future Land Use Map, except for an area on the south side, which was a large block of conventional residential [yellow; 0-6 DU/AC.] Mr. Rathje noted that the yellow site was Marquette Manor, which was composed of a church, grade school, and high school, and that they have long-range plans for significant growth.

Mr. Rockwell, in comparing a similar situation, asked Mr. Rathje to explain the uses at Victoria Center at 63<sup>rd</sup> and Woodward that is across the street from Meadowbrook. Mr. Rathje said it is part of a much larger planned development that runs along Woodward down to just south of Oxnard, and runs all the way west to Saratoga and then cuts out the grade school and high school. That's all one planned development. There is a mix of uses and it was done with R3 zoning, single family in the southerly and easterly quadrants then 3-4 different townhouse developments all done at R3 density with the townhome land use and then a small amount of commercial, which is the current Victoria Center. He noted it was just designed to be a little neighborhood center to balance out the rest of the development in the area and it was done and permitted as an exceptional permitted use under single-family zoning. Mr. Rockwell asked whether the stores could come and go in this exceptional use as they could in a business district. Mr. Rathje said yes, that it functions under business zoning, but that they had to go through planned development approval, and were required parking based on the commercial land use, and set back was based on the underlying R3 zoning, and the green space requirements were done under planned development.

Mr. Skach suggested bringing the conversation back into context, but he noted that the Victoria Center came up as related to the 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview area because people are familiar with it, and some concern that it may dilute the viability of Meadowbrook; hence might not this [Victoria] Center potentially, in the long-term, be better suited as an office-transitional use also in light of potential traffic conditions and proximity to residential. The Meadowbrook Center is struggling while there are the uses at Victoria Center, which may be better served at Meadowbrook to allow some separation from residential and concentrating on the large amount of underutilized land already designated for commercial use at Meadowbrook. There is also potential for some traffic conflict at that location. Mr. Rathje said that this goes back to the idea of having the mixed use so that people will have the townhomes and open space come out of that planned development which was the donation of that large park to the southwest of Downers Grove South High School. He noted that there were some benefits for providing some nice commercial intensity to the original developers. Some of those contributed to the overall benefit and enjoyment of the larger area came forward because there were some benefits extended and returned to the developers and in return, some benefits to the community. Commission Chair Jirik added that we could hold out for that heavy commercial retail. In some markets, it would be the right thing to do, but one can't tell the timing or the duration. Economies reinvent themselves and become something different and may never occur again.

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Commissioner Matejczyk remarked that it is important that this group take the long-view. Businesses go through their cycles. He then asked what gateway means to Downers Grove when it is right there and everything on all sides look just like it. Mr. Rathje answered saying it functions seamlessly. Commissioner Chalberg added that gateways are important. Mr. Skach noted that most municipalities, including Downers Grove, take great pride in their communities and want to highlight entries to their communities and often these areas receive more focused attention. Commissioner Matejczyk asked whether this means that this group should work closely with surrounding municipalities. Mr. Skach agreed that they are certainly interconnected, but it is not always in the interest of the adjacent municipality to share their information with other municipalities, especially when it comes to economic development plans or opportunities. Mr. Skach stated that in regards to gateways, the basis for the discussion here is not only good physical planning, but also revenue generation. The question is what can be done differently to distinguish ourselves, not only physically, but also economically from what other and adjacent communities are doing. Mr. Rathje noted, in referring back to the Victoria Center, its strength is in being small, compact and not dependent on a large anchor. It also has strength in its diversity of uses and should be rewarded and supported because it is designed well and merchandised well.

Mr. Rockwell stated the Victoria Center started as a PD and inquired if it is still under the same ownership. Mr. Rathje replied that by virtue of diversity of specific uses, everything there is under private ownership. Mr. Rockwell noted that there has been an office for lease in that site for at least two years. Mr. Rathje countered stating that the successful Finley Square Mall has several store for lease, but there would be no cause for alarm there.

Mr. Skach suggested returning to the original conversation regarding 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview and recapping the issues from the matrix. He noted this site has been characterized as a major vehicle oriented retail node at the intersection of major vehicular arterial 75<sup>th</sup> Street, and minor arterial street, Fairview Avenue, but in direct physical adjacency to and in physical and economic competition with much larger nearby retail nodes in an adjacent municipality. The Strategic Planning group considered how it might be affected if it were designated B2 versus B3. Mr. Rathje specified that B3 zoning is clearly highway commercial and 75<sup>th</sup> Street is every bit as equal of arterial roadway as Ogden Avenue. Commissioner Waechter wanted to know what B2 provides over B3. Mr. Skach replied it allows uses that might typically find along much of Ogden Avenue. Mr. Rathje felt that consideration of other zoning would take away the value of the property and that this was granted by the Village as an amenity as part of the decision to make the area a planned development. Mr. Waechter commented that this site seems to be doing well; not a lot of vacancies. Mr. Rathje noted the high quality of the structure. Committee Chair Riordan asked how do we attract stores that are in centers such as Fox Valley to come here. Mr. Rathje said that we are not competing with the same buying trip as someone who would go to Fox Valley. He noted that we may be competing for segments of it, but this is in a different category. Committee Chair Riordan asked about capturing the person who goes to Home Depot in Darien. Mr. Rathje stated that maintaining the opportunity by keeping a strong commercial zoning and working with the developer because there is a smart, aggressive management here.

Commission Chair Jirik discussed the K-Mart site on Woodward between 63<sup>rd</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Streets reporting that it is in decline. He suggested that the group look at what is going on there.

Mr. Rockwell noted that, as discussed earlier, with diverse ownership, they might not get along well. Mr. Rathje replied that that does not matter; they still have every right to have that use by themselves in their land area of the planned development. Committee Chair Riordan asked the question “why force them out?” Mr. Rathje responded stating that initially the discussion was about the possibility of going to B2, in his view down zoning and that it would be taken as a hostile act against the property owner’s rights by the property owners. Commissioner Chalberg requested an overview of uses the B3 provides compared to B2. Mr. Rathje listed uses including warehousing, storage, skating rinks, contractor shops and the like and noted that B3 has a potential semi-industrial type component. Commissioner Chalberg, in response, questioned whether these types of industrial-like uses were really appropriate. Mr. Rathje noted that B2 would have been a better use in the 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview area, but would currently not be worth defending. Committee Chair Riordan suggested making the whole 75<sup>th</sup> Street B2 versus B3 as Ogden-type uses might not be appropriate here but still allowing a higher scale development. Mr. Rathje stated that by doing that, you would threaten property owners by the perception of expanding commercial and that this could make the area unstable.

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Commission Chair Jirik suggested getting this group to a conclusion of this segment, but also to stay on the issues of commercial land uses. The first goal would be to determine what colors [land uses] should be on the Future Land Use Plan. The first area Commission Chair Jirik wanted to focus on was 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview, stating he did not see the intensity there, even though it is listed as B3. This area could use more flexibility. 75<sup>th</sup> and Lemont is one of our stronger commercial retail areas and this is distinctly more intense area because of the four corners and is zoned B2. He then moved on to the 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview area stating it is very small, that the mass is not there, and it is approaching that very strong, more neighborhood oriented center and draws traffic because of the great mass of all the other sites.

Mr. Skach, referring to 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview, given concurrence on its neighborhood orientation, commented that staying in the long-view and given everything that is happening around this site [Home Depot, restaurants] looking at distinctly commercial zoning but not necessarily B3/Ogden zoning could be considered at some point in the future stemming from this land use designation process. Mr. Waechtler commented that sometimes gateways are nice residential areas and we should remember that if we want to accomplish our goals, that we need the community's support.

Commission Chair Jirik commented that what he might be hearing is "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." He added that we stay flexible because you don't know what the market is going to be. He added that if there was such a tremendous incentive to raise that whole area, that would be great, but it must be harmonious with the area. Mr. Skach added that currently we have got "create vs. maintain" but concurrence to keep strong with commercial oriented base. Another option would be to reverse it to B2 after and if any land use refinements recommended. Mr. Rathje agreed, stating that he did not believe we needed to create it, that it is there with possibly some changes. Mr. Skach then suggested coming back and looking at the uses that are currently permitted in B3 and decide if, in the long-view, this is the character we want in that particular center. The group concurred.

Commission Chair Jirik then reminded everyone that any land use modifications require a public hearing regarding future land use. He felt that part of the confusion is that the Future Land Use Plan doesn't make that distinction between B2 and B3 type uses. Mr. Skach added that potential B2 was noted in the matrix to prompt that discussion because the land use designations might need to be crafted to convey a distinction including distinctions between single-site mixed-use designations. Mr. Skach queried if the group felt that at least at this point, the goal statement adequately captures the spectrum of differently views and that this particular focus area may not be a high priority, then we could move off it recognizing that there are still some issues that need resolution.

Commissioner Waechtler expressed concern that these conversations stay at a discussion level; that he has no problem moving forward, but feels concern about the B2 concept being rushed. Mr. Skach suggested adding B3 in brackets to the goal statement for now and Commissioner Waechtler said he felt more comfortable with that.

Mr. Skach asked the commission members if they were in concurrence with the goal statement and that the space at 75<sup>th</sup> and Fairview remain commercial. Commissioner Matejczyk asked whether the B2 and B3 references should be deleted and use the wording "appropriately zoned" instead. Mr. Skach suggested putting the words in "commercial" [B2] and [B3]. The group concurred.

Commissioner Chalberg suggested that the group look at the whole map and work on the gateways first. She added that the amount of time this group spend working on this should be representative of "where the most value added is going to be."

ELLSWORTH INDUSTRIAL PARK

Mr. Skach reported that this area, in terms of prior discussions between Redevelopment and the EDC, hadn't yet matured to the point it has now with respect to environmental developments and more recently, where the markets may lie, the question, nevertheless, in the long-view, is *Office, Research and Manufacturing* land use, where we want to be? If we are moving towards a market that's service economy oriented, with the possibility of more high-tech, clean room assembly, then you can start to have that supported by office and higher density residential and other types of uses. Mr. Rathje suggested the areas to look at are current development uses of properties and environmental issues. He stated that this property wouldn't be suitable for residential. Mr. Rathje noted that originally the Council wanted the industrial uses together so there would be compatible uses with one another and won't affect critical elements such as noise, vibration, and traffic activities. Mr. Rathje added that commercial and other uses could move in as long as they would be tolerant of one another. Commissioner Matejczyk asked if this was a free zone area. Mr. Rathje replied that it is a matter of land use property ownership and customer tolerance. He also noted that one of the problems would be parking requirements. However, we could broaden the non-residential uses to move toward, for instance, an incubator building that houses different uses. Commissioner McCormick pointed out that the group also needed to be aware of what was happening on Belmont, south of the Belmont train Station. The group concurred.

Committee Chair Riordan inquired how the Ellsworth Industrial Park is doing now. Mr. Rockwell replied that it is not in good shape. He did note that there are commercial businesses such as photographers that are coming in to take advantage of the parking, which is to the Village's detriment. Mr. Rockwell also mentioned that the highest thing you can get the EPA to sign off on is a park where kids go. They do not want to do that. He added that when you go into a residential area, you may find that developers in the market may get along better than expected and can grab some properties and put them together to overrun the entire park at pushing out the majority of larger industrial businesses. Mr. Rockwell then brought up Dicke Tools that is a 100 year old factory that he wanted to start converting into townhomes. Mr. Rathje noted that it doesn't matter how good the land values are, the Downers Grove Sanitary District has a significant impact on the surrounding area and they are where they are because the businesses are tolerant. Commission Chair Jirik stated that even if you can get past the groundwater issues, there would still be traffic noise and all kinds of things. He expressed that it may not be a good idea for conventional single-family residential in an industrial park. The group concurred. He suggested having some type of commercial, manufacturing, industrial, retail and keep residential out or minimal so it can be as intense as it wants to be. He even suggested getting a combination of restaurants and hotels. Mr. Skach noted a key question to answer is if the market could support it and noted the Village would need to evaluate traffic impacts on that area as well. The basic question however is "Do we see this going from ORM to some other version of commercial or mixed-use?" Commission Chair Jirik replied that it could be some hybrid. Commissioner Chalberg suggested adding some height; Commissioner Matejczyk agreed. Mr. Rockwell stated that he is under the impression that there would be an aesthetic and architectural requirement.

Mr. Skach reported that when this study was in its early stages back in February 2002, the EDC and Redevelopment recognized that this tract is so large, and opportunities for development so vast as well, that it has the power to effect markets and that it could create its own sub market. He added that this tract might warrant some assistance with determining market conditions similar to the Gruen Report, which was the first step in that direction. Mr. Rockwell reported that the "dirty poll" surveys taken, indicated that nearly 50% of the owners wanted to quit being owners within five years.

Commission Chair Jirik suggested that we should provide significant flexibility for redevelopment or recasting of the area in a variety of non-residential uses. Mr. Rathje responded stating that he didn't think we would want heavy industry. Commissioner Matejczyk added that as the value of the land increases, there would be less and less manufacturing; that it will go to Joliet.

Commissioner Chalberg inquired as to whether anyone had gone to Elmhurst or Evanston where they have two communities; one being the downtown and the other is a different area in the city that has it's own neighborhood. She added that she could envision some retail use and some small business at this location. Commissioner Matejczyk added that if the underpass was complete, it would positively affect the area.

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Council Member Sisul recalled when he worked with a group in Chicago on what was then a gasoline station; they would employ an engineered barrier to allow the residential uses. This was done to allow the Station Crossing redevelopment to occur in the downtown to include high-end housing. He suggested that remediation, including engineered barriers could be explored to afford a mixed-use situation to upgrade the quality of the housing in that area to the east and this might just prompt a developer. Commissioner Chalberg said that she found Council Member Sisul's ideas very interesting stating that if you didn't want to do heavy residential, you could add it to the mix of interesting hotels and a small downtown area as well. Mr. Jirik added that there might be a problem with the odors that would need to be explored.

Commissioner Waechter asked what happened to the concept of convention center with hotel tie-in. Mr. Rockwell responded that the Gruen Gruen + Associates was hired several years ago by the Council and Tourism Bureau and came up with a study that a convention center in Downers Grove without subsidy would probably fail. Mr. Rathje added that they even worked with the Alter Group at some point, and they were looking along Finley Road, which had much better visibility. Council member Sisul added that people at the Masonic Lodge were also looking at doing something up there also. Mr. Rockwell said they left the door open, but a situation like a convention center might require a heavy subsidy from the community. Mr. Skach noted that long-term market conditions may allow certain things to redevelop today that may not have been considered before. Commission Chair Jirik said that he wouldn't want to dilute the downtown. Commissioner Chalberg responded that it would not. Mr. Griesbaum said that an underpass helped Elmhurst tremendously. It was a whole rebirth of the city.

Council Member Sisul suggested putting the services within reach of the residential in this [Ellsworth] immediate area so that people could walk to get their services rather than drive. He also suggested building it near the railroad station. Mr. Skach noted that this would be consistent with the State-encouraged Smart Growth and "transit-oriented development" principles and allowing this tract to take part in it.

Commission Chair Jirik noted that this is an interesting site based on its geographic position. He added that there is a variety of ways to promote this: rail oriented, high tech, and a variety of things for the best advantage to the Village. It will help to tie in the East/West Corridor. Mr. Skach responded that there is definitely credence to that, but we cannot lose track that this land, on a per square foot basis, is likely not as productive as it could be from both a physical and economic standpoint. Mr. Rockwell concurred. Commissioner Chalberg added that there could be an intentional landscape buffer around the sanitary district. Mr. Rockwell asked if the neighborhood complained of any odors and Commissioner Chalberg said that she believed they do. Commissioner Chalberg said that she could envision a huge parking garage there for the train station, but Mr. Rathje said that had been seriously discussed, but he felt the proximity to Lisle's super station is too close.

## ADJOURNMENT

Committee Chair Riordan suggested wrapping up the meeting and look toward further discussion. He asked if the group was generally in agreement. The group concurred.

Commission Chair Jirik asked the Commissioners if they were comfortable with the process and to feel free to make comment. There were no comments and Chairman Jirik noted "we must be doing something right then." He suggested that those who can find a way to improve or energize the process, to please feel free to comment at any time.

It was determined the next meeting would be held March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

Members of the Plan Commission and the Strategic Planning Committee concluded discussions at 9:20 p.m.

ALAN JIRIK, COMMISSION CHAIR, PLAN COMMISSION

AND

MICHAEL RIORDAN, COMMISSION CHAIR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION