

APPROVED MINUTES

MINUTES
OF A WORKSHOP DISCUSSION
WITH THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AND
MEMBERS OF THE PLAN COMMISSION
ON
APRIL 5, 2004
AT THE VILLAGE HALL, COMMITTEE ROOM
IN THE VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE

On behalf of the members of the Plan Commission and on behalf of the Economic Development Commission [EDC] Strategic Planning Committee [Committee], EDC 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: PC Chair Jirik, Commissioner Griesbaum, Commissioner Matejczyk, Commissioner McCormick, Commissioner Nicholaou, Commissioner Reynolds, Commissioner Waechtler

Members of the Strategic Planning Committee: EDC Chair Riordan, Commissioner Bilek, Commissioner Bohanon, Commissioner Chalberg, Commissioner Randall, Commissioner Ryan, Commissioner Weiss

STAFF

PRESENT: Joseph Skach, Director, Planning and Community Development
Steven Rockwell, Director, Economic Development
Catherine Schuster, Assistant Director, Economic Development
Amanda Browne, Planner, Planning and Community Development
Keith Sbiral, Planner, Planning and Community Development
Lori Sommers, Planner, Planning and Community Development

GUESTS: Tracy Kasson, Rathje and Woodward
Charles Argianas, Argianas & Associates, Inc.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 17, 2003

Commission Chair Riordan asked if there was concurrence on the minutes from the workshop held November 17, 2003. The members of both Commissions concurred.

Medical/Dental Clinic as permitted uses in the Manufacturing “M” Zoning Districts

Mr. Skach began the discussion noting there had been some inquiries by some petitioners that needed to be better placed into context given past discussions of the Committee. He then asked Mr. Sbiral, Planner, to address the zoning designations of medical and dental clinics. Mr. Sbiral noted that the Village, over the past year, had received several inquiries regarding whether to allow Medical/Dental Clinics in Manufacturing [“M”] zoning districts. Mr. Sbiral stated that Medical/Dental Clinics are currently permitted by right in Business Districts [“B2 and B3”] and Office-Research-Manufacturing [“O-R-M”] zoning districts; and that they are permitted only as special uses in “M2” districts. He added that these areas are located in areas such as the Ellsworth and Oak Grove Industrial Parks. Mr. Sbiral also noted that Planning and Community Development researched 19 different surrounding communities as well as DuPage County, and the greater majority of them did permit Medical/Dental Clinics in their Manufacturing Districts but the Village did not allow them in M1 districts but required special use approval in M2 districts.

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Mr. Sbiral noted that other types of clinics were already permitted uses in the "M1" zoning district, which were animal hospitals, laboratories, and medical/dental research. Mr. Sbiral noted that the Planning and Community Development [P & CD] came up with a list of preliminary conclusions/recommendations, which could provide the appropriate language for a change in ordinance if the Committee concurs. Commissioner Matejczyk agreed, stating that this is a trend in light manufacturing, and since Downers Grove does not have heavy manufacturing in these districts, there is no reason not to make these allowances, as it would help strengthen our retail areas. Commissioner McCormick asked how Medical/Dental Clinics compared to General Office land uses. Mr. Sbiral replied Medical/Dental Clinics may be more intense traffic-wise but not necessarily when compared to offices that employ many people, but not to a huge degree, and that the parking requirements would be similar. Commissioner Reynolds asked why some communities did not allow Medical/Dental Clinics in a Manufacturing District specifying Arlington Heights. Mr. Skach replied that Arlington Heights still had some areas that would be considered traditional heavier Manufacturing-Oriented Districts where such office uses, regardless, may not be compatible. Commissioner Nicholaou also agreed with the proposed concept, noting that some of the vacant buildings in these areas in the Village, given the existing light industrial, office orientation, would be excellent locations for Medical/Dental clinics as an alternative to our commercial retail areas. Mr. Skach mentioned that another issue regarding the requirement for a special use in the "M2" District was that it could be considered a disincentive to locating in "M2". Removing this requirement could help.

Commission Chair Jirik asked if, procedurally, this needed to go first to the Mayor and Council. Mr. Skach replied that the recommendation first would be required to come through the Plan Commission for formal consideration based on a specific proposal for a zoning ordinance amendment making Medical/Dental Clinics permitted uses and then Council would subsequently see it per normal procedure should a positive recommendation be made by the Plan Commission.

There was concurrence by both the Members of the Plan Commission and the Strategic Planning Subcommittee of the EDC to recommend that staff move forward with a petition to amend the zoning ordinance consistent with the preceding discussions.

Potential Additional Commercial Oriented Land Uses (Belmont Ave. Corridor between the BNSF Rail Road and Maple Avenue)

Mr. Skach summarized an inquiry from a potential petitioner regarding the east side of Belmont noting that there had been previous concurrence by the Committee that this area is a Commercial-oriented node, but that areas currently zoned Residential to the north were in question as to whether they should remain higher density Residential or an extension of the Commercial node. He noted that the question previously arose whether there was enough parcel depth currently to support Commercial land use.

He went on to note that a petitioner inquiry came from the existing office use owner of a facility who has inquired what the best use was regarding the Maple and Belmont node and do the Commercial designations potentially go further north along Belmont. Commission Chair Jirik asked if it was a matter of changing the existing land use designation from Residential to Commercial. Ms. Browne replied that it was, and that in terms of the corridor further north from Belmont and Maple because the inquiries are coming in for office uses, which are a lower intensity and could be considered transitional in nature stepping down in intensity from traditional Commercial to Residential. Commissioner McCormick asked Ms. Browne if she was referring to the building built by Sievers several years ago. Ms. Browne replied that the property north of that. Mr. Skach added that the property being referred to is north of the Domino's Pizza and the Italian Market which contains residentially zoned lots in the County but currently contains a low intensity office use by special use in the County.

Mr. Skach noted that the Council had already seen the overall strategic planning recommendations including identifying the Belmont-Maple node as Commercial. Commissioner McCormick asked if the intention was to change the Future Land Use Map north of this Commercial node. Ms. Browne said that it was not at this point, that this is an informal, non-binding advisory discussion. Mr. Skach added that if the property owner decided to petition to annex into the Village, then the property owner could potentially be brought in as "B2" Business District or with "R" Residential zoning, but that this discussion is an extension of previous discussions about

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how far north the existing Commercial [Red] Future Land Use Map designation should extend north of Maple Avenue.

Commissioner Nicholaou asked how the underpass would affect this area. Mr. Skach replied, as this Committee anticipated, that there would likely be pressure for this whole area to expand under a Commercial [Red] land use designation along the corridor between Maple and the BNSF tracks. Commissioner Matejczyk expressed concern regarding the pressure the underpass may have on the shallow depth of the lots in this area, and that this group should encourage the consolidation of lots to help this situation. Commission Ryan asked how deep would the lots be required.

Mr. Skach noted that, in this case, the existing Office use is already there and already established an Office use. Mr. Skach added that, through conversations with the Village legal staff, there was exploration of what appropriate controls or conditions could be placed on an annexation agreement, and that the site could be considered an "Office/Transitional" land use and that the Village Attorney felt confident that they could craft language in an annexation agreement that could condition that annexation upon an "Office" in a perpetuity, as certain other "B2" Business uses would not function as a transitional land use. Ms. Browne added for clarity that the commercial office use issue did not entail a depth increase from east to west, but the issue of annexation and the appropriate land use designation of the existing 6-11 dwelling units per acre [Orange] a change to Commercial [Red]. Commissioner Waechtler reminded everyone to keep in mind that any new development can be intrusive to residents. Commissioner Reynolds mentioned that doing a buffer zone such as a parking lot, or offices may be a good transitioning tool from commercial uses to residential uses. Commissioner Chair Jirik agreed that this requires good buffering or screening, and suggested that the existing 6 to 11 unit per acre land use designation likely facilitates multi-family, used as a transition in other areas. Also, a very moderate, non-intrusive land uses such as single or two story maximum office, also as a transitional use, could be desirable. Commissioner Nicholaou agreed that this requires a very thoughtful discussions, which may take several meetings as the area develops.

Commission Chair Jirik suggested that another alternative would be to take it up with the residents to see what their vision for the neighborhood is. Commissioner Waechtler asked Commissioner Chair Jirik if he was referring to the resident's lots going deeper from Belmont. Commission Chair Jirik replied that if the lots are deeper, they might be supportive of a more significant intensive use which may not be desirable. Commissioner Matejczyk agreed, but that going deeper does not necessarily mean more intrusive to the neighborhood. Commission Chair Jirik clarified that there would need to be severe prohibitions on uses, and the only way to mitigate for that would be to add depth to the lots. Commissioner Waechtler asked Ms. Browne specifically what kind of depth they were looking at. She replied that the lots closer to Maple are in the 150 feet deep range and the lots more northerly, closer toward the tracks are approximately in the 175 feet range.

Commissioner Ryan noted that there is newer residential development activity going east on Curtiss Street including new homes and teardowns, which is indicative of already significant residential building going on throughout Downers Grove. Commission Chair Jirik agreed and emphasized that assemblage of potential commercial site square footage has some bearing in terms of what the Village might want to do. He also addressed the importance of management of curb cuts as they have a significant affect on traffic generation. Mr. Rockwell cited, per traffic counts, the majority of the traffic is coming from the south, moving north, which could affect which side of the street retailers might want to be on. He added that it reverses itself in the evening. Mr. Skach noted that there is a notable tract of valuable land in terms of its revenue potential to the Village, which this Committee is recommending to redesignate Commercial [Red] on the west side of Belmont, yet there are physical constraints that will be challenges as on Ogden Avenue, and the current inquiry gives some indication of the issues regarding having sufficient space to provide for not only the base use, but its supporting parking and landscaping.

Commissioner McCormick asked if the area on the east side of Belmont was a Transitional land use or more of a buffer. Ms. Browne replied that in terms of the office use coming into the Village, it could be considered transitional, as it is not traditional commercial retail. Mr. Skach noted that this was related to potentially using lower intensity Office uses as Transitional land uses between traditional commercial and residential; although such a "transitional" a land use designation or zoning does not currently exist. Mr. Skach added that they also have the option of coming in as a Residential land use, potentially "R6" and request a Special Use for parking.

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Ms. Browne agreed, adding that the issue of accommodating a particular desired use could be made by either making it a straight Commercial land use designation and subsequent Business ["B district] zoning designation, or by possibly looking at a Special Use situation accommodated in a Residential zoning district upon annexation.

Commissioner Waechtler noted with respect to inquiries by businesses near the future underpass that the development of the underpass would have an impact and should be taken into consideration on whether additional lot depth is warranted similar to Ogden Avenue. Mr. Skach stated that modifications to a particular lot would probably only take place if that property owner decided to purchase a property and look for an answer from the Village. He then referred to the SAAB dealership's petition mentioning the minimum amount of depth needed in order to accommodate landscaping where SAAB purchased additional property adjacent to the south to create an adequately sized site. Mr. Skach noted it was approximately 300 feet. [285 feet upon verification].

Commissioner Kahlke suggested that it might be helpful if this group would first visualize what is there along Belmont what the Village would like to see along the east side of Belmont Avenue.

Commissioner Matejczyk expressed concern for the need of a direction and these types of discussions, with the increasing amount of pressure from commercial interests. Commissioner Nicholaou agreed, stating that he was not yet comfortable making definitive statements suggesting that some members of the Plan Commission could familiarize themselves more with the area by walking or driving it. He also suggested other visualization means of what the suggested vision could be, including types of stores, landscaping, etc. and take it to the Council for their opinion. Mr. Skach noted that at this time, the purpose of the discussion might not be to advocate in a particular, detailed direction, consistent with strategic level previous discussions, but only to give a potential petitioner some guidance in the context of those discussions. Mr. Skach also cited that the Future Land Use Map currently has a plan in place, which designates that land as 6-11 dwelling units per acre, [Orange] which often has 'R5A' zoning, which includes townhouse/row house zoning. He asked for clarification if there was reluctance on behalf of the group to discuss any further changes from residential to commercial designations at this point. Commission Chair Jirik replied that what may be warranted in response to a potential petition is the opportunity to communicate with the neighborhood and the developing community. He added that "going lighter" [less intensive] in this area would be the more appropriate action than coming in with heavy, intense activity which could inadvertently set the tone for the entire strip. Commissioner Nicholaou suggested that before an outside source comes in, that this group drives the area to get a sense of the neighborhood, meet again, and welcome the petitioners to attend.

Mr. Skach then introduced Chuck Argianas of Argianas & Associates, Inc. who owns the existing offices located on the east side of Belmont just north of Maple and Belmont along with Tracy Kasson, Attorney of Rathje and Woodward, also in attendance. Mr. Kasson stated the intention of attending this meeting was to get some sense of the Village's direction before actually going through the public hearing process. He reported that the office building Mr. Argianas owns was built a number of years ago by Sievers and Associates in the County, and that it was zoned DuPage County "R4" with a Special Use for the office use. He added that they would like to now annex into Downers Grove noting they are already receiving sewer and water from the Village of Downers Grove. Mr. Kasson noted that they would like the property to have a zoning designation that included "Office" as a permitted use, which would most likely be "B" or Business zoning in the Village. Mr. Kasson reported that Mr. Argianas would like to also annex two additional lots that he purchased to the north of the mentioned property; one currently vacant and the other, a house. Mr. Kasson noted that Mr. Argianas would also concur with these properties being designated for office, lower intensity uses as a transition from commercial to residential. He added that they are hoping other opportunities arise to pursue property further north for the same type of low intensity office development.

Mr. Skach reported that there had been another inquiry from a property owner who wanted to expand his existing business located on Belmont just south and east of the BNSF tracks. Commissioner Ryan asked if the property was currently designated as a Residential land use and would it need to be changed to Commercial. Mr. Skach replied that the proposed parking use is permitted in residential subject to a Special Use. He compared this to the SAAB property on Ogden Avenue that fronted on Cumnor Street, adding SAAB bought an additional lot back and the Village rezoned it to B3. Mr. Skach added that this was facilitated by the Ogden Avenue Master Plan and discussions of this body.

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Commissioner Ryan requested clarification regarding what the next steps were. Commissioner Nicholaou suggested that this group, on their own time, drive down and visually study the east side of Belmont and to also take notice of the residential area that abuts these properties; and at the next meeting, the group can discuss what they think the properties should be. He added that there should also be input from the public before any definitive recommendations were considered for the east side of Belmont.

Commissioner Reynolds noted that there were two different issues, one being the future plan of the east side of Belmont Avenue and the other being more specific office space contemplating whether the Commercial [Red] area at Maple and Belmont be expanded north to facilitate Office as a transition. Mr. Skach replied that the first issue relates to the potential of deepening the Belmont corridor, and the second relates to the two Commercially-designated nodes that are in the Belmont corridor [Maple and Belmont; BNSF and Belmont] and whether you expand them or not. Commissioner McCormick agreed with Commissioner Nicholaou regarding this group visiting the property, noting a house on the site that is in disrepair, and that might become a blacktop issue for the neighbors on the east side of Belmont Avenue. Mr. Kasson stated that they had a similar situation, and that they did not blacktop the entire area, that there was some buffer. Ms. Browne added that there would need to be visual buffering of the adjacent Residentially-zoned property to the south. Mr. Skach cited that if this group were to have this conversation with a potential petitioner, it would probably be correct that there is some hesitancy at least at this point about bringing this use in as "B" zoning and redesignate it as a Commercial land use designation as opposed to moving forward with a special use in a residential district, in which case it could retain its Residential land use designation and zoning. Commissioner McCormick stated that, from a practical standpoint, the only potential changes are this office building Argianas property and potentially something with the restaurant on the north.

Mr. Skach stated that a decision did not have to be made immediately and that discussing the issues is helpful to staff if a petition does go forward. Commissioner Nicholaou suggested that the group should meet again within 30 days to revisit the subject while the discussion is still fresh in their minds. Commissioner Kahlke agreed, adding that now is the time to start planning it out and getting some idea of what it is they would desire to have there. Commission Chair Riordan questioned whether this was really warranted given the conceptual nature of the issues. There was not concurrence to meet at a future date certain. Commission Waechtler suggested that staff may get additional information from the petitioners. Commissioner McCormick requested at a next meeting on this area that staff provide an update on the underpass status for the next meeting. Mr. Skach noted that Metra is working toward their 2005-2009 window for the underpass. He added that along side of that process, there will continue to be inquiries from potential petitioners that may come up and may need to be addressed on an as needed basis. Mr. Skach mentioned additional items of discussion that will be coming in the future including B3 Permitted Uses and potential additional conditions for new auto dealers especially on Ogden Avenue.

Commissioner Chair Jirik inquired whether it was the consent of the assembly that the issues currently brought up by inquiries from potential petitioners get come to the top of the agenda compared to the other issues that have been discussed over the past 18 months. Mr. Skach said that the staff's priorities are bringing to fruition the first part of the discussions, get the Future Land Use Map modified and through the Plan Commission to Village Council with the Housekeeping map, then the New Proposal map would go to the Plan Commission and then to the Village Council. Commission Chair Jirik noted the importance of prioritizing the list of issues and make sure they match the vision of the Mayor and Council. Commissioner Nicholaou noted the value of the discussion regarding the current inquiries because this specific petitioner is interested in a number of properties, which would noticeably affect the easterly side of Belmont Avenue at its south end. He added that these discussions also set a tone for future discussions regarding the underpass.

Commissioner Nicholaou suggested the longer committee think about a smaller subcommittee of 3-5 people to focus on specific issues as they arise and come back to this group to discuss their findings. Commissioner Waechtler referred back to what Mr. Skach mentioned regarding potentially having assistance from a consultant do the research due to the expansiveness of the Ellsworth area. Commissioner Chalberg asked what part of Ellsworth would be included in this analysis since the park is so huge, it will impact what happens in the market on the east side of Belmont. Commissioner Chalberg then recommended getting the study completed as soon as

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possible. Commission Chair Riordan agreed with Commissioner Nicholaou that subcommittees may be warranted to broach inquiries when they arise.

Commission Chair Jirik suggested, for future meetings, putting a 40-minute time limit on each topic to improve the productivity of the meetings. There was concurrence to consider this limitation.

Commissioner Matejczyk asked the staff if there had been any traffic studies or projections done recently. Mr. Skach added that subject has been discussed amongst staff as comprehensive, recent data was not available and that there are current plans to move forward with a village-wide thoroughfare plan.

Members of the Plan Commission and the Strategic Planning Committee concluded discussions at 9:05 p.m.

ALAN JIRIK, COMMISSION CHAIR, PLAN COMMISSION
AND
MICHAEL RIORDAN, EDC COMMITTEE CHAIR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION