

**Meeting Minutes**

**Downers Grove Comprehensive Plan  
Village of Downers Grove**

**August 16, 2011**

**Call to Order**

Mayor Tully convened the August 16, 2011 Village Council Comprehensive Plan meeting in the Committee Room of the Downers Grove Village Hall at 8:10 p.m.

**Attendance**

Commissioners Neustadt, Rheintgen, Waldack, Schnell, Durkin, Barnett, Mayor Tully, Manager David Fieldman, Village Attorney Enza Petrarca, Village Clerk April Holden, Deputy Village Manager Mike Baker, Communications Director Doug Kozlowski, Community Development Director Tom Dabareiner, Community Development Planner Jeff O'Brien, Consultant Devin Lavigne, Houseal Lavigne Associates

Village Manager Fieldman presented an overview and summary of the Village activities regarding the Comprehensive Plan (the "Plan") since the last meeting held in June 2011. Discussion for this meeting will include Chapters 4-8 on policy recommendations, focus area plans, and land use plan and vision. Changes to the document since the June meeting include an explanation of State law requirements; viewing the document as a foundation for future policy discussions as opposed to obligating the Council or another government entity; a redraft of the Vision Statement; and minimization of TCD3 references with regard to the description of TCD3, elimination of redundancies, and moving the Goals and Objectives section of TCD3 to the Appendix.

Mr. Fieldman continued, stating that the revisions are based on individual Council member interviews, as well as discussions held at numerous meetings. He said that the draft brings the bottom line to the forefront, with a reduction in redundancies, and stresses focusing on the policies and recommendations. Staff believes the document is now more easily understood. He said that it is important that they walk through the Chapters 4-8 on policy recommendations.

Chapter 4

Community Development Director Tom Dabareiner said that the land use plan is prepared last because the land use plan and vision statement write themselves after preliminary review takes place. He referred to policies and recommendations on page 40 of the draft, noting that Devin Lavigne and members of the Committee are present, as is Village Planner, Jeff O'Brien.

Mayor Tully expressed appreciation for the changes made, stating the document lends itself to easier review page by page. He did note that under Neighborhood Character on page 37, there is a clause referencing the character of the neighborhood, and he asked about the definition of "character of a neighborhood," and how one identifies it.

Mr. Dabareiner responded that the easiest example would be a historic district. Where appropriate, the character might be a useful tool. Mr. Fieldman said that character refers to the characteristics of a neighborhood.

Mayor Tully then referenced page 38, Property Maintenance, which contains a reference to the Village “exploring” the creation of a property maintenance program to assist residents with property maintenance problems. He said he takes that to mean exactly what it says—to explore or encourage—which means they may or may not do it. Mr. Fieldman said that was correct.

Commissioner Schnell commented on #5 of Residential Policies and Recommendations, which bears the phrase that a “guide should be created.” [#5 – A guide or tool should be created to encourage and promote expansion and redevelopment that is a desirable scale and character.] She asked if it actually means creating a guide. Mr. Fieldman responded that it is a suggestion that the Village should do this. Commissioner Schnell asked if this would be similar to the Naperville guide.

Mr. Lavigne replied that discussion of the Naperville guide was specifically brought up, as it gives a builder cues as to what to look for in a specific community.

Commissioner Schnell then referenced #9 of Residential Policies and Recommendations, saying that at one time the Village belonged to a group providing a home chore program. [#9 – Consider developing a property maintenance program to assist residents, particularly seniors, with affordable lawn cutting, snow removal, and other appropriate services.] She asked if the idea is to look at that again, or to develop maintenance guidelines. The Manager responded that the Village still has some home chore programs. This section speaks to considering development of an actual program and not to maintenance standards. The program would assist those who might need help in maintenance of their property. He added that #7 of this section refers to property maintenance, while #9 is specific to seniors.

Commissioner Neustadt commented that he likes #7 and #8 of this section. [#7 – Continue to require properties to be maintained in manner that is compliant with the Village’s adopted property maintenance standards. #8 – Consider a building registration and inspection program for unoccupied/vacant properties to prevent foreclosed or neglected properties from having a detrimental impact on surrounding properties.] Property maintenance is a growing issue in the community. As to #5, however, the word “desirable” is questionable, as the definition of desirable could change. He is not sure that he agrees with #5 as it harkens to the design elements for the downtown area. He thinks this is too broad for the Village. He supports #9 if the objective is to reinforce the existing program.

Mayor Tully referred to the words “encourage and promote” in #5 of this section, saying he takes this as not meaning it is required. Mr. Lavigne replied that it is a soft recommendation, not mandating, but informing and educating.

Mr. Dabareiner noted that staff does receive requests for construction guidelines.

Mayor Tully commented that this plan is at a certain altitude, and other Councils down the road may define terms more clearly or differently, as that is the nature of the beast.

Commissioner Neustadt pointed out that it is helpful to know that people have requested this type of information.

Commissioner Barnett said he has trouble with the use of the words “desirable” and “character.” He then suggested that the wording on page 37, New Development & Reinvestment, could be used instead,

such as height, setback, etc. Mr. Fieldman responded that the Zoning Ordinance addresses issues such as bulk, setback, etc., and the Comprehensive Plan goes beyond those issues.

Mr. Lavigne then explained the significance of the guide, saying it would look at the setbacks in the specific neighborhood so construction would blend in. It would not supercede zoning, but would allow the construction to be more compatible with the rest of the block or neighborhood. Mr. Fieldman explained that the Council would make the decision as to what the guidebook would be.

Commissioner Schnell asked if they could provide a copy of the Naperville guidebook to the Council. She has some of the same concerns raised by Commissioner Barnett.

Commissioner Barnett then referred to #9 of Residential Policies and Recommendations, saying he would like commentary suggesting “likely means based/tested.” On page 38, with regard to sidewalks, the statement appears not to reflect the current policy, and he sees it as under-emphasizing the concept of sidewalks throughout the community.

The Mayor asked where the discussion belongs, as there is a whole section on it on page 64. He suggested cross-referencing those sections.

Commissioner Waldack commented on the process, saying he has had the new version for approximately a week. Comparing them to the previous version is a nightmare, and he appreciated staff providing the track changes version, as it is very helpful. He noted that some of his colleagues keep referring to the word “desirable,” and he doesn’t have a problem with this word. That word is used repeatedly in the Village’s ordinances. He noted that many of changes were made, but they don’t know who suggested the changes or why. Commissioner Waldack then referenced page 3, and the word “social,” which has been removed from the characteristics. He’d like to see that word put back in. It disturbs him, and he doesn’t know where else the word might have been removed.

Mayor Tully suggested changing the wording to “characteristics.”

Commissioner Neustadt noted that lots of words have changed. He agrees that the tracking version is good. He thinks they have to look at the greater good of the Plan so they can move forward.

Commissioner Waldack responded that if this was done at a public meeting, they would know who wanted the change and he would like to know that. Mayor Tully responded that he believed one or two people said it at a public meeting. Commissioner Waldack reiterated that he would like to know for the record. On page 40 of Residential Policies and Recommendations, #4 and #5 were eliminated in this version of the Plan. [#4 – Residential development regulations, including compliance with setbacks, maximum height, parkway tree preservation, stormwater, bulk and density should be consistently administered and enforced. #5 – New residential construction regulations should be consistently administered and enforced, including construction hours, fencing, trash and debris, parking, and other construction related activities that can impact nearby properties.] He read those sections, regarding residential construction, and asked why they were removed, as the residential development regulation process was a major event for the Council. Commissioner Neustadt replied that #11 addresses this. [#11 - The permitting process should accommodate residential renovation and redevelopment through a consistent, expedient, and thorough process.]

Commissioner Barnett commented that some of this might be a conscious effort to not spend time talking specifically about things that have already been addressed. Mr. Fieldman responded that throughout the document, things that were started, completed and addressed were removed. Mayor Tully suggested that this go into the other resources sections. Mr. Fieldman said that the comprehensive

reference would be the Municipal Code. He suggested “residential policy recommendations” as the new wording.

Commissioner Rheintgen complimented the staff on the changes presented. She said that she has an issue with #5 of Residential Policies and Recommendations, because what is great about this community is its diversity. Her fear is that the guide or tool could turn into a requirement. She might have a better concept if she saw the Naperville guide. She then referred to a run on sentence under property maintenance.

Commissioner Schnell asked if they could add a #12 to Residential Policies and Recommendations referring to the Council policy of sidewalks on at least one side of each street. There is a future aspect to this policy and they are not completely done with the sidewalks at this time. She sees the addition as reinforcing the policy.

Commissioner Neustadt then referred to page 40, which discusses sidewalks. The Mayor said he thought that this speaks to a developer’s requirements. Commissioner Neustadt then asked if redevelopment would occur, would the developer have to install a new sidewalk. Mr. Fieldman said they would. He said they will reference the sidewalk section in earlier sections of the Plan.

## Chapter 5

Mr. Dabareiner said this Chapter refers to commercial areas policies and recommendations. There are 18 items. He noted that there was a recommendation in the text of this Chapter for design guidelines that did not get carried over. He suggested adding #19 to Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations as design guidelines. In response to Commissioner Neustadt, Mr. Dabareiner said he has multiple requests for such design guidelines.

Mayor Tully commented that he loves the section on partnerships. He referred to page 52, Partnerships, regarding forming a task force, and asked about the intention of the task force to reduce the cost of doing business in Downers Grove. The Manager said the intent is with respect to economic development and to remain competitive and enhance revenues. The Mayor responded that we do that all the time and he doesn’t see the need for a task force. This is an ongoing activity. The Mayor then referred to #3 and the terms “stricter business licensing,” “development moratorium” and “amortization of nonconforming uses.” [#3 – The Village should consider the use of tools such as stricter business licensing, development moratoria, and amortization of nonconforming uses to achieve the desired type, size and location of commercial land uses.] Mr. Fieldman said these are tools that should be considered with respect to commercial land uses.

Mayor Tully referred to #12, Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations, agreeing that the use of Special Service Areas is underutilized; however, he thought that it should be stated in some way that they have to be in conjunction with those to whom it would be imposed, or those that would be affected. Mr. Lavigne suggested “those benefiting.” [#12 – The Village should consider expanding the use of Special Service Areas (SSAs) to accomplish stated goals and objectives for the Village’s commercial areas.]

Commissioner Neustadt commented on #10, Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations, and asked how the Village can improve the telecommunications infrastructure. [#10 – The Village should enhance wayfinding and directory signage and improve telecommunication infrastructure within light industrial/business parks to better accommodate the needs of modern industrial users.] The Manager said that the Village may be able to facilitate better telecommunications. Commissioner Neustadt then referred to page 52, Regulation and Relocation of Uses, asking what kind of relocation assistance the

Village can or should provide. Mr. Fieldman said that would be up to the Council, and could include a whole range of options.

Commissioner Schnell asked if, #14, Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations, they are referring to Fairview and Belmont, about expanding the transit system. [#14 – Mixed-use areas outside of Downtown should be focused around the Village’s transit infrastructure, especially through the use of transit-oriented development (TOD) principles.] Mr. Dabareiner said they are strictly talking about the land use focus around those nodes. The Manager said they are talking about the area along the train, and not expanding transit in the community. Mr. Lavigne said it would include everything which would provide the ability to transport individuals, including bus stops, toll ways, etc.

Commissioner Durkin said he felt that the focus area eliminates the south side, and that is a major concern he has with the whole proposal. There is too much concentration on Butterfield and Ogden Avenue. He doesn’t know if there is a way to incorporate anything on the retail side. With regard to stricter business licensing, he doesn’t understand the use of the word “stricter” since the Village doesn’t even have a business license. Mr. Fieldman responded that the Village does license certain types of business.

Commissioner Durkin then addressed #13, Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations, which refers to maintaining the first floor for retail businesses, and he would like to see the words “sales tax generation” incorporated into the wording. [#13 – Offices in Downtown should be encouraged to locate above the ground floor whenever possible in order to preserve ground floor units for retail businesses.] He noted that there is no discussion about green initiatives.

Mayor Tully said that they can cross-reference this to the appropriate section.

Commissioner Barnett said he is not sure that he agrees with the wording “sales tax generation”. On page 20 he noted the term “more tired industrial uses,” and that concerns him. He’d like to see that concept of “outdated” changed to “beyond more basic traditional” or something of that nature which would be less negative.

Commissioner Waldack then commented on the “transit oriented development” (TOD), asking that it be explained more clearly. He agrees with the sales tax retail regarding first floor businesses. In terms of the reference to the south side, he said he thought it could be called “new urbanism.” Mr. Lavigne said that TOD is defined on page 135. Mr. Dabareiner said that they can bring the terms forward.

Commissioner Schnell commented that page 52 refers to retail nodes and de-commercialization, and mentions commercial strips and corridors. She asked if some reference could be made to specific areas.

Ms. Chris Fregeau commented on page 53, #17, Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations, asking how they will enforce the section under industrial and retail sales. [#17 – Uses within light industrial/business park areas should be restricted in order to protect these areas from the infiltration of non-compatible commercial, institutional, membership or recreational uses.] There are some businesses in the Ellsworth area that are industrial, but do have retail aspects to them. Mr. Dabareiner said this area gives direction as they look to amending the Zoning Ordinance distinguishing between primary uses and secondary uses.

Michael Cassa, President, Economic Development Corporation, noted that retail users in industrial areas have changed the understanding of industrial parks. He said that some of the businesses typically operate only on weekends, and can’t afford to operate in a traditional retail area. The problem is that often the lighting and sidewalks, as well as parking may not be compatible with retail use.

Mr. Greg Bedalov referenced item #13, Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations, saying the issue goes back to activity and a bright, vibrant downtown. First floor businesses are important in encouraging people to come to the downtown area. However, restricting the areas to sales tax generation may be limiting.

Mr. Fieldman said that offices should be encouraged to locate on other than the first floor. Mayor Tully indicated that this is setting up a framework for ordinances and Municipal Codes.

Commissioner Barnett said that with regard to #17, Commercial Areas Policies and Recommendations, he is uncomfortable driving zoning rules that would limit commercial opportunities for landlords to consider new business. As a property owner, if you have space, why would you want it empty or unused. The Mayor asked about examples of how this could be done. Commissioner Barnett said he would like to hear more about problems leading to this limitation, and the wording of protecting areas from non-compatible uses. Mr. Cassa said it is not about the uses as much as public safety issues such as parking. The Manager said staff would provide case studies and work on this item.

## Chapter 6

Commissioner Neustadt said he had no comments on this particular Chapter.

Mayor Tully questioned working in something about the Village's existing sidewalk policy, which is not as clearly stated in #5 or #6 of the Trails and Transit Policies and Recommendations. He recommended working in the statement from page 64 regarding sidewalks into #5. [#5 – Promote improvements to increase pedestrian affordances, including landscaping on public and private property, closing gaps in the sidewalk network and creating a safe environment through physical separation. #6 – Continue to install sidewalks and reduce curb cuts along the entire length of commercial corridors, to establish a complete pedestrian network.]

With regard to bicycling, the Mayor asked what kind of unnecessary obstacles, as opposed to necessary obstacles, would be detrimental to bicycle mobility and safety. Commissioner Neustadt mentioned items like decorative concrete areas around parks.

Commissioner Schnell then referenced the section regarding bicycles on sidewalks. She noted that sidewalks on Ogden Avenue would be regular sidewalks. Trying to walk along a sidewalk with a bicycle is difficult, and she would like to see some statement concerning eliminating unsafe situations.

Mr. Lavigne said in areas that are not pedestrian friendly, such as Ogden Avenue which is not used as frequently by pedestrians, special exceptions can be made to allow bikes on sidewalks with preference to pedestrians. This is an accepted standard.

Commissioner Durkin noted that there is no mention made of the Grove Shuttle. Mr. Dabareiner responded that this is a general statement of all transit.

Mayor Tully referred to the recommendations on page 65 regarding a comprehensive transit plan, and suggested moving this to page 68, Trails and Transit Policies and Recommendations.

Commissioner Barnett referred to pages 58 and 59, Functional Classification of Streets, saying he would like the history and technical commentary as to how they arrived at the designations on the map in terms of classifications of streets. There are huge discrepancies in wording of street definitions. Mr. Lavigne noted that this information was provided by IDOT.

Ms. Fregeau expressed concern about page 64 that states there are 240 miles of existing sidewalks, and she suggested adding the word “continuing” to reinforce the positive instead of the negative. The wording is less positive than it could be.

## Chapter 7

Mayor Tully had no comments on this Chapter.

Commissioner Neustadt said he also had no comments, but felt that this section was 100% better than the previous version.

Commissioner Schnell agreed, as did Commission Rheintgen, that this version reads much better.

Mr. Lavigne commented that they could bring green initiatives into this section. He said they could also add a section for green initiatives. Mr. Dabareiner suggested that it be included in the section on Implementation.

Commissioner Barnett commented that it needs to be reflected appropriately and prominently.

## Chapter 8

Commissioner Neustadt noted that item #11 in Community Facilities Policies and Recommendations references police protection, but does not include fire protection. [#11 – The Village should continue to work to ensure effective police protection services are maintained throughout the community.] The Manager said that would be added.

Mayor Tully commented that he appreciated the way this was written. He asked about the schools section regarding negatively impacting neighborhoods on page 84, Schools, and whether this is talking about the Zoning Ordinance. The Manager responded that it was.

Mayor Tully commented on page 88, Fire Department, regarding the section on fire protection, opportunities for consolidation, etc. He suggested wording that encourages continuing to pursue opportunities of consolidation and cooperation in all areas.

Commissioner Barnett thought that should be under a separate paragraph.

Commissioner Durkin noted #6, Community Facilities Policies and Recommendations, asking why LEED is included in this. [#6 – Should the Civic Center project move forward, the Village should “lead by example” and consider the use of all best practices, including sustainable design and development practices and consider LEED, or similar, certification for the project.] He then asked about including Public Works in #11. With regard to #13, Commissioner Durkin asked why they would specifically bring up the Post Office in the downtown area. [#13 – The Village should promote and encourage the relocation of the Post Office truck operations from Downtown while maintaining the postal retail functions.] That should move to page 53, Commercial Area Policies and Recommendations, in the area discussed about downtown. Mr. Fieldman said they will eliminate the reference to LEED.

Commissioner Rheintgen asked the meaning of #12 on page 92, Community Facilities Policies and Recommendations. [#12 – The Village should maintain regular contact with healthcare and educational providers to ensure land use and revenue goals are shared.] Mr. Lavigne responded that the Village

would accommodate the needs of healthcare and educational facilities. Mr. Dabareiner said staff will clarify the wording.

Commissioner Barnett then commented on pages 84 and 85 and the blue headers. He recommended adding Higher Education, which would recognize the additional involvement of Midwestern University and its established presence in the community.

Commissioner Waldack suggested taking out the word “recently” with regard to Washington Park under stormwater facilities.

### Other Comments

Mayor Tully recommended using the word “branding” in the Goals and Objectives section. He then referenced page 146, #6, Residential Areas, and suggested including word “areas” as well as homes. [#6 – Continue to inventory and enhance regulatory protections for the Village’s notable historic homes including its collection of Sears homes.]

Commissioner Durkin asked when they will next meet, and the Manager said staff will work with the Council.

Commissioner Barnett thanked the staff and Committee for doing such a good job. This has been a tedious and difficult process and he appreciates the work that was done. The Village will end up with an awesome product.

Mayor Tully thanked everyone who worked on this project, and helped to make it a smooth process.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, Mayor Tully adjourned the meeting at 10:16 p.m.