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Village Board: No Viable Whiteco Alternatives Submitted

After 69 days of seeking alternatives to the proposed Whiteco LLC development at Harlem Avenue and Ontario Street the Village Board has unanimously agreed that no viable alternatives were submitted.

Two items were submitted to the Village by local residents, but Board members unanimously decided that neither contained sufficient information to be deemed viable for consideration.

“We carefully reviewed the items submitted as part of the alternative proposal process, but it was immediately apparent to the entire Board that neither came even close to giving us anything of substance to compare to the Whiteco proposal,” said Trustee Gus Kostopulos who co-chairs the Board’s economic development committee with Village President Joanne E. Trapani.

The lack of details in important areas such as design and financing made it impossible for the Board to even consider their viability, according to Kostopulos, who added that interested parties had months to prepare alternatives and should have been able to provide more specific information.

Trapani echoed Kostopulos’ assessment of the length of the process, calling the opportunity for others to offer alternatives “extensive, open and extraordinarily long.”

“No one can say there was not enough time to come up with a relatively detailed alternative,” she said. “The actual call for alternatives was published in early August, but it has been stated since this began two years ago that the Board, by law, would be seeking alternative proposals.

“The Village’s intent and legal obligation to seek alternatives also has been widely reported in the newspapers and explained in each of the numerous public meetings dating back to April. Any serious individual, partnership or company has had ample time to study the site, examine the Whiteco proposal, arrange financing and prepare the kind of documents that would have enabled the Board to assess the viability of their concept. But none did.”

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No Whiteco Alternatives
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Of the two items received by the Village, one – submitted by Holley Court Commercial Partners – was a variation on a concept presented during the first round of Whiteco alternatives two years ago and the other a letter from the Berggren Realty Corp.

The Holley Court Commercial Partners' recommendation included a banquet hall, 12 restaurants, three nightclubs, 18 residential units, 4,000 square feet of retail space, 10,000 square feet of office or gallery space, a 24,000-square-foot performing arts center and underground parking for 450 cars. The Berggren Realty Corp. recommended 97 residential units, 10,000 square feet of retail and 200 parking spaces.

For more information or to view the documents submitted by the two entities, call 358.5640 or email devsvcs@oak-park.us.

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