

DTOP Sub Area Plan
Steering Committee Meeting
September 27, 2005 – 6:30pm
Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School

Present: Chair Bob Tucker, Dong Gilbert, Sonny Ginsberg, Rich Carollo, Steve Rouse, Carolyn Saxton, Ray Johnson (C. Bassett for Lueck), Vince Michael (6:45p), Ilhan Avcioglu (7:02pm), Greg Marsey (6:55pm)

Absent: Colette Lueck, Ilhan Avcioglu, Greg Marsey, Lisa DiChiera, and Vince Michael

Village Staff: Craig Failor and Jim Budrick

Chair Bob Tucker introduced the meeting. The overview of tonight's meeting will consist of public comment to start and will speak with the consultants. Issues have come up with the school committee members have concern over other organizations that may have opinions on what should happen to the Super block area. Indeed, most of us, here at the table have already offered their opinions on this game plan at a minimum... Others belong to other community or political groups. The fact remains that we have a very involved group here and work in the best interest of our Village.

Carolyn Saxton spoke asked the presenters to give their overall presentation in ten minutes and then we will allow ten minutes for questions from the committee and from the public.

We will now have the public presentations.

Roger Camron - Prairie Bread Kitchen.

I would like to offer my opinion. From a business person in the area that has been there 10 years. I am located (pointing at a map) I think this whole process offers an unusual opportunity because we're thinking this is the largest frame of reference. We are not talking about a building here or there, but a whole infrastructure and a whole improvement of a super block. The two things that seem most important to me as a business person are (1) parking and (2) circulation. I think it's most important to get those two things right. More important than a particular building being saved. or any other concerns. In reference to the map, Mr. Roger talks about what goes on from one end of the block to the next. There is no real circulation in terms of traffic or parking. I would to see successful planning and plans for a large amount of parking, (parking for 1200 cars) rather than a minimal amount. Obviously (pointing to the map), I would like to suggest that this targeted area offer an opportunity for parking and

something in partnership with Metra. If we can somehow develop parking in the area that we have available and offer that, maybe we could actually draw people from the surrounding areas and maybe they would come back from their job, and stick around at the end of the day, here in Oak Park. One of the problems that I have seen is the lack of ability for people to see what's going on down at this end, from this end (pointing to the map) along Lake street and Harlem. What they see is just storefronts, other places you don't see. I personally think that Station Street is a good idea. I think you want to open up an opportunity for people as they are driving up Lake Street to be able to see to the South and open up Marion Street to get inside the block as much as possible. I would hope; as the Red coop group suggested that we're able to open up Marion Street as much as possible, make it exciting and dramatic. (In referring to the map), the possibility for the inside of this block, regarding retail and restaurant would be increased.

I think what people what to preserve is a sense of place and I think what people are afraid of is what they would get, if they give those places up. I think if we have the right ideas of what will replace the old,

Q: On Marion street, do you have an opinion about two-way traffic, one-way traffic, in which direction?

A: I think we want to keep it as pedestrian friendly as possible with broad sidewalks. Whether that means one-way or two-way, I think we just want to preserve the pedestrian friendliness. Mr. Roger refers to the map, indicating areas that are broad (back to Harlem) and that appears to be a problem.

Q: I'm a retailer. I'm interested in the comments of opening Marion Street and how the stores are managed in terms of the.....

A: Obviously it could look better than it does. I like Marion more than I dislike it. There is a problem with the cracks in the sidewalk, etc. I'm more concerned with what kind of retail we have. The reason I am for opening up Marion Street is that it doesn't work for retail.

Kathryn Jonas - 124 S. East Avenue

Ms. Jonas read from a prepared handout. Please see attached.

Q: Richard Kelly from Spauldings (owner) spoke. He felt that the streets need to be open to help retail, or it will not be successful.

A: I respect your opinion.

Q: Barbara Mallarkey spoke: She's concerned about the businesses on Marion and Lake Street didn't receive proper funding from the TIF funds. Please see attached letter from the above.

Mr. Redd Griffin

Mr. Griffin felt it was a great process. Mr. Griffin had a DVD to present Regarding, the history of Oak Park, created by Joe Kreml (VOP staff) We need to think about people coming from all over the world, not just Oak Parkers. This is a world class community. Please see attached hand-out

Q: Mr. Munro had a question. Did FLW teardown other buildings to build his own?

A: I don't think FLW would not be against taking some buildings down, he was critical of his own work.

Q: Mr. Iverson spoke. What was it about FLW and Oak Park that brought out the best and the worst in architecture?

A: The turn of the century was very important. Leaving the land open for new development.....inspiring people to come in and do different things. He talked about the development of new technology to express more enduring values and the appreciation of nature. The need for appreciating democracy was stressed by Mr. Munro as well.

Q: A gentleman from the audience spoke. How do you mesh symbolism and shopping? What I'm looking for is the change factor. The reason we're here is because retail and property taxes are at two economic edges in Oak Park. The more retail there is, the less pressure there is on property taxes. How we put into place an area that will be attractive for retail? Can you tell me what your concrete ideas are for that?

A: Use your imagination. The idea of the corner window was to open space up to the outside and let outside come in. Whatever we do, let's stay authentic, let's stay Oak Park.

Joe Antunovich for Taxman

I am a collaborator with the Taxman Corporation and with focused development in your community. What we see here tonight is a collection of ideas. Ideas that we've garnered from trying to be good listeners. We're also collaborators over on Euclid Terrace and the Shops of Oak Park. We believe that's an excellent model to follow for this critical piece of property in your community. The new buildings that were constructed

to mixed use were well integrated into the historic buildings and I think that same touch can be applied here in downtown Oak Park. I share many of the speakers' comments about the opportunity here. The opportunity here in downtown Oak Park is an opportunity too good to miss. The surrounding historic district simply makes it more critical that we create a true, special sense of place here in this downtown environment.

One of the problems is that the block is just too big, and if we can reduce the block into manageable parts, perhaps, many of what we are discussing can come together to create a fabulous sense of place. We need better integrating of Harlem, Westgate, Lake, Marion and North and South Boulevard. These streets are all right now somewhat dead-ended and it's somewhat critical that we create a sense of the streets to have a sense of place. Our planning concepts and our design elements are summarized in the books that are assembled. (See booklets)

Mr. Autunovich presented a slide presentation concerning a commitment to redesign the environment in the downtown area.

Q: Rich – Can you address the access across Harlem to River Forest Township Center might be improved?

A: We would have to talk with IDOT. We indicated a new gateway created at that location. We see the right end/right out because of the proximity. As far as the connection across, that's something that we would be prepared to talk to IDOT about. It's really a tough one.

Q: Steve – Both of your plans don't show the Colt building? , can you explain why?

A: One of the challenges we have here is to come up with enough development sites to create the increment that would be required to pay for all these improvements that we're proposing. If we are committed to creating a grand, open space, we want to be able to align the space with viable retail.

Q: Vince M: - A question regarding the TIF money.

A: We would like to create enough new development to create additional opportunities with the TIF.

Tim Hayden – Taxman Corporation – We have run through some preliminary numbers, obviously their concept plans....., we believe what we will end up with very significant TIF revenue. We need to walk through the budget, etc.

Q: Ilhan - With the streets of Oak Park, the whole south end is Taxman?

A: The Taxman Corporation developed the River Forest Town Centre.

Q: Ilhan – What kind of constraints were Taxman under when those two things were built?

A: All three of these projects were a product of the public partnership.

Q: Doug Gilbert – the observation that I have is the heart of our downtown is Marion Street and the Marion street mall. It seems that you are creating a new heart and new focus. Can you comment on this?

A: It's not our intent. We see it as a district. There is a certain critical dimension that retailers say people can walk (about 3 blocks). What we have is a little less than 3 blocks in any direction and we would like to extend that a little further down Lake Street. What we're creating is a retail district. We believe the shops on Marion will be as viable as the shops on Hemingway Court.

Q: Mr. Ginsberg – I'm trying to get a sense of how it would look on grade level in two places. One, along the court of Westgate and Marion.

A: When you look at the old photographs and you look behind the trees, the trees are almost too dense, can barely see the retail. There are a lot of lovely historic facades. Possibly, put two traffic lanes at 10 or 11 feet and have sidewalks on the south side. Propose on the north side, a marvelous brick building, move the storefront back 12 feet to create an arcade, put the sidewalk through the arcade, taking away some retail in the building, rather than taking the building down. The arcade would give the impression of a bottleneck.

Q: Do you have anything in mind for the existing historic buildings?

A: The tree buildings would be totally restored and retained. . A significant part of them are approximately 30ft. deep, and will remain intact on both floors. Smaller spaces could be used for retailers; offices could remain on the second floor, etc.

Q: A question was posed from the audience regarding the current parking..... and if all of the commercial condo and/or rental?

A: Yes, it is possible to have all of the above.

Q: Roger K. – why had you chosen the particular Hemingway Court?

A: Simply because of the respect for the north side and to create a retail depth there. Allows us to L-shape the residential and create a development parcel to pay for all of the improvements.

Q: Vince Michael – Great effort to preserve the best of Westgate. Would it be possible to save any parcel on Lake Street?

A: If you're committed to reinvigorating Lake Street, the connection between Hemingway Court and Marion on the south side of the street would be very important, To take the next step and interest the kind of retailers that would make the streets successful, would be good.

Q: Gene Armstrong – Marion Street is the heart of downtown Oak Park, (parking structure south end of Hemingway Court) and the façade on Lake Street. Can you integrate and preserve it, because there is nothing behind it?

A: There is no particular reason to preserve it. We see this process as collaborative. If we build a mass model, we will collectively come up with a solution.

Q: Sy Taxman – Concerned that the focus is to defer parking, long-term leasing is the overall concept of placing Lake Street into Westgate.

A: The concept and principals are the same. We believe that we can integrate those streets and still have continuous retail and four corners. (Please refer to the presentation).

Q: M. Reust – What about corporation ownership?

A: Please refer to the slide presentation

Q: Gary Schaub – What will Oak Park get out of this other than higher taxes?

A: What is it going to cost to truly renovate these buildings in the true sense of historic preservation and what are the costs associated with that? We are trying to seek through the goals collectively. We think this plan is a very sensible one.

Q: Tim Hague – Mr. Hague has a question regarding the Colt building.

A: This plan illustrates the land ownership.

Q: K. Jonas – Appalled at the density at what you’re proposing. Preserve historic character. It’s overwhelming. The mass is nothing less than overwhelming.

Q: Steve Rouse: Question regarding information pertaining to revitalizing the Colt building.

A: There are three options for the Colt building.

- A. Totally open the mid-section.
- B. Have the second level become two buildings and the basement go all the way through
- C. Have the whole façade better

We want to do this right. We want to restore it or take it as a redevelopment. We have to look at project costs, return investments, etc.

A discussion ensued regarding the return of investments, estimated at 11 million, nine hundred thousand. An estimation of generating \$300,000 in taxes was also announced. In addition, adding a 600 car parking garage, at a cost of one million dollars to the Village (see slides).

Ms. Andrea Terry discussed the following options in her report:

- Options A: Adaptive Reuse
- B: Historical Rehab
- C. Redevelopment

Bridget Lane presented her BDI presentation. The bottom line is that it’s a powerful decision on the expenditures vs. what the analysis will be. Re-emphasize the recommendation of the Colt building. One of the critical issues will be planning and construction.

Q: Pat Zubak had a question about parking needs, etc.

Q: D. Gilbert had a question concerning face lift and redevelopment and renovation. Appears to be more retail space oriented – why is that?

A: It obviously will increase the value of the area. It’s depth.

All of this is changeable. The facelift is a change nothing strategy.

Q: Rich had a question concerning configuration relating to retail?

A: It’s about specifications

Q: Munro – Concern of the first floor use.

Q: Mike Fox – Concerned about the parking.

A: It's really a no change strategy. The renovation would have to be part of an old world strategy and it would involve parking garages that are absolutely right. You cannot look at the Colt building in isolation. It's either in or out of the project. There are all kinds of "ifs" here.

Q: Gary Barnes – He's concerned about the numbers. The fundamental issues here are not being acknowledged.

Please note that next scheduled meeting will be Thursday, October 6, 2005 at 6:30pm.

A motion to adjourn was made by Rich Carollo and seconded by Steve Rouse. So moved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea F. Mance
Recording Secretary