

DTOP Sub Area Plan
Steering Committee Meeting
October 6, 2005, 6:30 p.m.
Brooks Middle School

Present: Chair Bob Tucker, Ilhan Avcioglu, Doug Gilbert, Sonny Ginsberg, Colette Lueck, Rich Carollo, Steve Rouse, Lisa DiChiera, David Weindling
Absent: Greg Marsey, Ray Johnson, Carolyn Saxton
Village staff: Doug Kaarre, Jim Budrick, Bob Clements

Motion by Rouse to approve the minutes of September 20, 2005. Second by Carollo. Motion approved.

Chair Tucker stated that he allowed Taxman to bring their models to the meeting. He contacted each committee member since the last meeting to ask where they stood on the issues. They each provided their comments to him, and he compiled them into a discussion point plan. This plan, which is not the final plan, is a starting point which sought compromise.

The next meeting is Tuesday, October 11 at the same location. They will present their final plan to the Village Board on October 17.

Ms. Lueck asked if there would opportunity for feedback from experts, such as parking and traffic, prior to presentation to the Board.

Chair Tucker stated that hopefully they will comment during the meetings. He asked the consultants to speak up if they see anything. He presented the draft plan proposed from committee member comments. The plan is based on majority comments. In the plan the Colt Building would be demolished and a new street would connect Lake to North. The 1145 Westgate building would be demolished. A parking garage would be constructed on the parking lot on North Blvd. A new pedway would connect the garage to Marion Street. New residential would be added near North with first floor retail. A new building would be constructed on Westgate (not requiring demolition) with retail and residential. There would be two new buildings on Lake and one on Marion. Marion Street would open one-way and Westgate would open one-way. There is a new left-turn lane on Lake north onto Marion. There is a new right-turn lane on Lake south onto the New street. Adding Maple Avenue is not feasible as it's too close to Harlem.

Ms. DiChiera asked for clarification of what buildings are to be demolished on Marion.

Chair Tucker stated that only buildings shown as having No Merit. The committee had stated they wanted more density but not too much. Façade improvements to the Shops of Oak Park were important. For a flatter parking deck you need a larger garage. It could connect above New street. Or a new building could connect to Old Navy building and we would have two parking decks on either side of New street. Marion plaza has

an empty lot behind it which could be a future parking deck and the plaza could connect it to Marion.

Mr. Rouse suggested spreading the parking out closer to Lake.

Chair Tucker suggested taller buildings should be away from Lake.

Mr. Gilbert stated that the north-south width of the North Blvd. garage lot doesn't seem wide enough for a garage. It seems the only way it to take off the backs of the Westgate buildings. That's problematic from a preservation standpoint and a building owner standpoint.

Chair Tucker stated that a garage would fit but it couldn't hold 500 cars.

Mr. Rouse asked how they keep the height from blocking the view of Metra riders.

Chair Tucker stated that the buildings near North Blvd. would be high and the view would be blocked quickly.

Ms. Lueck stated that she looked at downtown from the Metra station, which looks down Marion Street. The Green Line station is near the New street, but the view would be blocked quickly.

Mr. Ginsberg stated that what concerns him is aesthetics. Open street traffic and create density near the Metra without removing historic buildings. That's what they have to do.

Chair Tucker as how the committee felt about extending the parking garage over the New street. It would have parking and residential above.

Mr. Carollo asked how many spaces the garage would have going over the street, and could it have the same amount by cutting into the back of the Westgate buildings.

Jim Budrick, Village Engineer, stated that the North Blvd. lot goes to the back of the Westgate buildings 120 feet. There was a public alley there. They would need to keep it or alter where ComEd gets their access to those buildings.

Ms. Lueck stated they also require access for loading, trash, deliveries, etc.

Andrea Terry, Bauer Latoza Studio, stated that you could provide loading and access from inside the parking garage. It's often done.

Ms DiChiera asked how high the garage would have to be.

Don O'Hara, KLOA, stated that a flat floor requires a speed ramp around. With a 60 or 120 foot bay, you can have 1) two-way parking on the ramp and a flat deck, or 2) a scissor ramp. You don't want to go more than eight turns with a 120-foot ramp (four

floors). The costs are higher with two garages. It's easier to building in bulk. The cost per space depends on the garage. A pre-cast garage, like the High School garage, is about \$13,000 per space. A poured-in-place garage, like the Avenue garage, is about \$19,000 per space.

Bridget Lane, Business Districts Inc., stated that she recently did a parking feasibility study for Naperville. New retail often wants 15-foot high ceilings, which makes the ramp above them for parking higher. Adding residential requires sprinkler issues, etc. A garage with retail, three levels of parking and three levels of residential had a cost of \$28,000 per space. This was due to life safety, construction costs, retail, integration of uses, etc.

Mr. Ginsberg stated that it seems more of a reason not to mix residential and parking. Put residential above retail and keep parking separate. They need the density elsewhere.

Mr. Rouse stated that is place for density.

Mr. Ginsberg suggested putting a residential tower over the New street next to the garage.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that he doesn't support the New street and opening Marion. He supports a partial opening of Marion only.

Ms. Lueck stated that they could re-look at the proposed buildings on Lake that are 3-4 stories. The Marshall Field's height would allow them to be higher. Lake is wide and it would not feel like a canyon. You could go to five floors.

Chair Tucker stated that the proposed building next to the Gap building is five floors. He's trying for a consensus. An 80-foot building next to a one-story building would look funny.

Ms. Lueck stated that you don't need 80 feet, just go a little higher and spread the retail out. The parking garage is the sticking point. There will be problems in every location. There are also parking needs on Lake. A garage needs to work for Marion, Lake and the New street unless you demolish Westgate. There is no good way to do it.

Mr. Gilbert stated that he is not opposed to a garage on North Blvd., but he's not convinced it would work well. The sidewalk is not wide on North. People come out of the train there. He looks at where 1145 Westgate is, creating a deeper and wider garage, but that affects the location of the proposed New street.

Chair Tucker stated that a majority of the committee wanted a New street which connected Lake and North.

Mr. Carollo stated you could raise a few residential floors higher to get more parking elsewhere. He supports moving the garage into the backs of the Westgate buildings.

Chair Tucker stated that people want more pedestrian friendly streets, bike paths, cobblestones on New and Marion streets. Marion could be blocked off for festivals.

Other questions the committee needs to consider:

- Do you want to recommend that the Board follow-up with the National Trust for Historic Preservation on looking at the Main Street program?
- Do you want to recommend that the Board follow-up on looking at punching Maple Avenue through the railroad viaduct?
- What are your thoughts on landscape features for Marion Plaza? Maybe an interactive fountain.

Mr. Rouse stated that they're losing parking spaces and need to make them up without a new street. The parking garage doesn't work as well and they need to widen the footprint of the parking.

Mr. Avcioglu asked why they are adding more residential if they're losing parking.

Mr. Ginsberg stated that all new residential developments provide their own parking.

Mr. Rouse asked that 63% of the tax base comes from the Shops of Oak Park. If they're taking away their surface parking, how will the tenants react and what are the costs?

Tim Hague, Taxman Corp., stated that they need the consent and cooperation from the tenants and it depends on how it's presented. They have 90 parking stalls for the Shops and Westgate businesses. The reality is that many employees park there. They need to discuss with them how a garage would change them. He's optimistic. It also depends on the proposed new tenant mix.

Chair Tucker stated that their parking garage options are:

- Continue the garage over New street.
- Take out the Old Navy surface lot and have two garages.
- Cut into the backs of the Westgate buildings and keep the facades.

Mr. Gilbert stated that it's the facades vs. the buildings. The significance of the Westgate buildings is in the facades. There is no character or value to preserve in the interior spaces. Keeping the facades has potential, but there is a danger to doing a "façade-ectomy" or just adding a thin layer to a new building. Clipping the backs off is feasible, but going all the way up to the front is more questionable.

Ms. DiChiera stated that Doug Gilbert's version of the garage shows how a vertical garage could save the 1145 Westgate façade and connect to Lake Street.

Chair Tucker stated that version wasn't used in the plan because it didn't have a New street with four corners of retail, which the majority wanted.

Ms. DiChiera asked for comments from the experts on Doug Gilbert's plan from a parking and circulation standpoint.

Chair Tucker stated that there is a concern that its moved away from Marion.

Don O'Hara stated that what matters is how many bays are provided in the garage and if you can park on the ramp. You're playing with fire on circulation. There is a one-way system further east on North and South Blvds. which works well. If North is one-way east-bound it cleans up Harlem. South is one-way westbound, so you can't get from the parking lot on Marion to the New street. Make Marion one-way north to Lake and one-way south from Lake to Westgate. Make Westgate one-way west, then everyone can get around. This plan is close to the Taxman B plan.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that Doug Gilbert's Option 1 plan is better for preservation. Can the committee submit two plans to the Board? He's assuming the Board will be split.

Chair Tucker stated that he's open to it and asked for committee comments.

Mr. Carollo stated that more than one plan opens up the process to more than two plans. They should submit one plan the majority agrees on.

Mr. Rouse stated that he agrees. It's their responsibility to make a majority plan.

Mr. Gilbert stated that it would be ideal for a consensus and one plan. They could include one plan with the Colt Building and let the Board decide.

Ms. DiChiera stated that she agreed with Doug. It is the Board's decision and will probably be based on numbers. When could they hear from the Taxman tenants regarding the parking lots?

Mr. Ginsberg stated that it's a tough one. The Board needs to see the minority plans but don't send them more than one recommendation.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that he's okay with Colt vs. Non-Colt plans.

Ms. Lueck stated that they need one plan. That was their charge. It's not historic preservation vs. new buildings, but what functions well. Individual members could present their own opinions on the majority plan.

Chair Tucker agreed that the committee needs to submit one plan but the Board could see other plans. He asked the committee to comment on whether they want to submit an alternate plan for the Colt Building.

Mr. Carollo stated that the consensus doesn't support preserving the Colt building. Only the façade is significant.

Mr. Rouse stated that he wanted to save the Colt building, but the costs aren't there for preservation. They would be \$4-5 million in the red.

Mr. Gilbert stated that he wanted to save the Colt or have a real discussion on its viability. At least they're having that debate. He admits the numbers don't look good and it would be hard for the Village to spend the money. Losing the building could result in good things – better retail, circulation, the preservation of other buildings, maybe the creation of a preservation fund?

Ms. DiChiera stated that LPCI wants to find a solution for preservation. Solutions for rehab have been presented. She understands the financials and losing the Colt building is unfortunate, but their priority is landmarking other Westgate buildings.

Mr. Ginsberg stated that losing the Colt is an opportunity to make other Westgate buildings visible. Opponents have a different vision of Oak Park, but we're trying to make Westgate viable.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that he's concerned about getting the right retail. He doesn't want the Streets of Woodfield. It's not free to demolish and build new either. He supports keeping the Colt Building and restoring the arcade. There are few like it.

Ms. Lueck stated that it's about what's feasible. There are so many needs downtown. Spending lots on one site limits money elsewhere. She is not in favor of keeping the building.

Chair Tucker agreed. It costs too much money. It is a painful decision.

Tim Hague stated that they will have a sensitive conversation with their tenants. They have out of town headquarters and won't take it lightly. They want to have a supported plan before they approach them. The Taxman A plan captures more of a sense of place. Plan B is if tenants don't agree. They will have the conversation, but not until they have a complete plan.

Mr. Ginsberg asked what Taxman's view of the proposed plan is.

Chair Tucker stated that the recommendation to the Board seems to be not to purchase the Colt Building. The result will be a negotiation between the Village and Taxman.

BREAK

Chair Tucker asked the committee which of the parking options they favored.

Ms. Lueck stated that she is not in favor of two garages. If you lop off the back of the Westgate buildings you still need access. She's not crazy about building over the New street. She's concerned about creating a cavern and visibility barrier. It's complex designing a parking garage. They need to guess at the number of spaces needed and find a workable spot. The engineers will take the final look. She prefers lopping off the backs of the Westgate buildings.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that they should build parking where it exists. He could support maybe a small part of the backs of the Westgate buildings being removed, but not only the facades should remain.

Mr. Ginsberg stated that he would like to see the garage without residential above, and have the residential over the New street. It could look like a gateway vs. a cavern.

Chair Tucker stated that maybe it could have an arched aspect to building over New street, and use arches elsewhere.

Ms. DiChiera stated that she has no comment on building over the New street. It's not a preferred practice to only keep the façade of a building. If you do, keep at least 30-40 feet of the building. She's not convinced of the layout of the parking garage. She prefers Doug Gilbert's plan.

Mr. Gilbert stated that he is not opposed to the garage location. The size seems to small. They need an adequate setback from the front of the buildings on Westgate. You could do a decent building over the New street. They could pursue doing the garage on the west side of New street and make it wider than what's shown on the map.

Mr. Rouse stated that he favors taking the backs of the Westgate buildings and keeping 30 feet. The New street seems wide. He's not a fan of building over it.

Mr. Carollo stated that they don't know if its enough parking. They should take some of the backs of the Westgate buildings and add more parking behind Marion plaza. He's not in favor of going over the New street.

Chair Tucker stated that there is a consensus not to go over the New street and to remove some of the backs of the Westgate buildings.

Jim Budrick stated that you need another 60-foot bay.

Mr. Gilbert stated that if you shift the garage west to the Old Navy building you could make it bigger.

Mr. Rouse stated that it moves the parking away from Marion.

Joe Antunovich, Antunovich & Associates, stated that it is 210 feet from the Westgate facades to North Blvd. You need speed ramps, with retail on the first floor the challenge

is to get to the second floor. You need 122 feet on the current lot for circulation. Removing the alley and a little bit of the backs of the Westgate buildings. To go over the street, it would need two levels of parking and then over the street. The pass-through could be high enough and wide enough not to feel like a cavern.

Ms. Lueck stated that the plan has no legal bearing. They can't get a level of detail without a huge amount of work. The committee won't get there. The plan may not work for people due to unknown constraints. The comments with the plan are equally important.

Chair Tucker stated that their not charged with the details but with a general vision. 210 feet minus 30 feet of the Westgate buildings leave a 180-foot garage.

Joe Antunovich stated that the parking dimension is tight for ramps and you need a 240-foot wide garage for efficiency. The Avenue garage is 240x120 with 600 spaces. The inefficiencies in this plan are due to retail on the first floor. They should concentrate on planning directions to the Board. General issues like have the New street, keeping the Westgate buildings, opening Marion Street, etc.

A member of the public asked if you could have a 180x180 garage.

Joe Antunovich stated that it doesn't work for ramps.

Ken Busse, Busse Consulting, stated that there are a lot of public infrastructure improvements in this plan. To pay you have to improve the functionality of the buildings. You'll need more rehabs. If more TIF money is dumped into keeping the facades it will require gutting the buildings which is just as expensive. You're losing parking visibility of stores in the northwest quadrant of the plan.

Vince Michael stated that the dimensions are not clear. The sides of the historic buildings along the New street could be improved for retail. You can't assume that all the historic buildings need a subsidy. Infrastructure improvements create viability.

Mr. Gilbert stated that they need to balance the new development space with spaces for local retail. They need a mix. National chains need better integration to better impact the local shops.

Chair Tucker asked if there is a concern of the committee to keep historic buildings with a national retail mix.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that he agrees with Doug. Some people will walk more than 1-2 blocks.

Chair Tucker stated that want to create an auto-friendly environment that is pedestrian-friendly too.

Ms. Lueck stated that the CA plan looked at the numbers to get a TIF return to do what needs to be done downtown. That drove their square footage proposals. We're doing that in reverse.

Mr. Ginsberg stated that it may be more expensive to revitalize the historic buildings, but that's what we want to do. That's why he's trying to get more density to create more money. They need a mixture. They need to focus on how to pay. The plan only shows a concept.

Mr. Rouse stated that the Trustees told us not to worry about a budget.

Vince Michael stated that the CA plan showed four options with returns. The preferred option had a large return and large infrastructure investment. How much or little can you do in the TIF?

Ken Busse stated that it has to do with phasing. The increment generated must pay for the first phase depending on the size of the garage and the amount of retail. You assume any new residential has its own parking. You have to look at TIF-eligible and non-eligible costs.

Mr. Carollo stated that they seem to agree on the need, location and size of the parking garage.

Chair Tucker stated that the consensus seems to be not having two garages, taking off the back of the Westgate buildings, including a pedway through to Marion or extend the garage over New street. They need 500-600 spaces and two proposals to get there.

Mr. Carollo stated that Mr. Antunovich stated lopping off the backs of the buildings is not feasible and the only way to get that many spaces is to go over the street.

A member of the public stated that the process has generated criteria to pass to the Board which will be tested in detailed analysis. This is an important first step.

Gary Schwab stated they are disappointed and upset with the process. The CA plan ignored the downtown historic character. Historic preservation agencies said that the Westgate ensemble is important, not individually. The Colt Building is the only designed building for Westgate and it did some things we want like a pedestrian pathway. The committee determined that they didn't want to keep the building privately. He's concerned about the Open Meetings Act. Yet this plan preserves the Shops of Oak Park.

The consensus of the committee is to recommend a garage with 500-600 spaces that removes the backs of the Westgate buildings and extends over the New street.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that they are nitpicking over the garage and ignoring public comments. He's opposed to adding more parking and destroying historic buildings. He didn't care for the email process. It should have been done differently to the public.

Chair Tucker stated that the Board didn't give them enough time. He dealt with individuals one-on-one to plan a consensus. It's not great to everyone and distasteful to a few. He doesn't want to ignore comments either. They're trying to reach a thoughtful compromise.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that all thoughts came down to last week. It seems like the Taxman plan with some tweaking. There were other plans presented and a Marion business survey that was swept under the rug.

Mr. Carollo stated that the Taxman plan included elements of other plans as well. They're trying to satisfy a majority. The only building not being preserved is the Colt.

Mr. Gilbert stated that they spent a lot of time talking about a parking garage. They need to do that. It's a big garage. His concern with the lack of a good garage footprint is that there is a danger in saying it doesn't work in the future and you could lose historic buildings.

A member of the public stated that this has been an incredible process. It was clear last week that they would take the input and put together a plan. Extending the public comments would not hear anything new. There has been openness on the committee to look at options and compromise.

Kathryn Jonas stated that she is not critical of the committee, this process was thrown at you. It is a horrible process. The Board said the National Trust should collaborate on downtown and they're not here. Only 20 people are here from the public. The expansion of this discussion beyond the Colt building is outrageous.

Chair Tucker asked for consensus on 500-600 spaces and one of the two garage options.

Mr. Rouse stated that Antunovich said the north option for the garage wouldn't work.

Jim Budrick stated that you need to go north and over the street to get 500-600 spaces. There's only one option.

Mr. Gilbert asked why they need the south end of the New street. Is it feasible to put retail all the way down to North Blvd? Do they need a two-lane street there? They do need some connection.

Joe Antunovich stated that retail can be viable on Westgate. It is critical for retail to be between Westgate and North. They need the retail continuity to create a shopping district.

Mr. Rouse asked if the retail on the New street would be national or local.

Joe Antunovich stated it could be both. Some cities require a certain percentage of local shops in a development. There is a value to having retail at the south end of New street. People can come by train and car and they would create a new walking pattern.

Chair Tucker stated that a member of the public asked that two letter dealing with historic preservation be provided to the committee. They were provided in the packet. There seems to be a consensus to go up and over for the parking. What are the committee thoughts on having Westgate one or two-way?

Mr. Rouse stated that Don O'Hara suggested one-way west from Marion.

Bridget Lane stated that many towns regret one-way streets for retail vitality. Let the engineers deal with that.

Mr. Gilbert stated that what's practical is to open Marion one-way to help keep the pedestrian character. Let Marion feed Westgate. Westgate narrows at the east end and the building there is significant. He's hesitant to create an arcade at the corner.

Mr. Rouse asked for an explanation of the arcade.

Chair Tucker stated that it keeps the exterior but guts the building and creates a walkway through.

Joe Antunovich stated that it moves the storefront back 10 feet to create a sidewalk.

Mr. Carollo stated that they should just say they want the streets open and let the experts determine the direction.

Ms. DiChiera stated that they should keep the Marion building intact, without the arcade. Some areas can be one-way – she doesn't care which direction they go.

Mr. Ginsberg stated that people who don't live here find one-way streets confusing. The Parking & Traffic Commission only recommend one-way streets for safety issues. Two-way streets do a better job for the south end of Marion and Westgate.

Mr. Avcioglu stated that it should be one-way on the south side of Marion and two-way on the south side of New street. Leave the directions to the experts.

Chair Tucker stated that the consensus is to open Marion all the way with parking on the side, keep Marion plaza, have the ability to close Marion, have a Euro-style street with no curbs as recommended in CA plan.

Mr. Rouse stated that he would like to see more parking on Marion. There's too much green on the plan.

Chair Tucker agrees. He encourages parking.

Vince Michael stated that there are 20 trees on Marion now and they should have 20 trees there when their done.

Chair Tucker stated that trees can cover signage, etc. They should be planted judiciously.

Mr. Gilbert stated that they shouldn't leave too much to the experts. They should be clear that Marion is to keep its pedestrian flavor and some open space. It shouldn't be a standard two-way street.

Chair Tucker recommends one-way for Marion.

A member of the public suggested improving the pedestrian access along North Blvd. There are no walkways or crosswalks on the north side of North. It is a terrible situation for pedestrians.

The committee agreed.

Chair Tucker stated that the next meeting is Tuesday, October 11 at 6:30 p.m. The committee should think about what message to convey to the Board for the Colt building and other ideas.

Mr. Gilbert stated that he would like to hear comments from the consultants next week. Will they create a new drawing for next week?

Mr. Rouse wants to hear from the TIF consultant.

Ken Busse stated that he sees different scenarios in each quadrant. You can assume a baseline plan (preserving buildings with a garage), and three scenarios progressing with development.

The committee consensus was that he focus only on what's on the plan and what was recommended for parking.

Motion by Rouse to adjourn. Second by Ginsberg. Motion approved.
Adjourn at 9:50 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Doug Kaarre