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Downtown TIF Key to Implementation

Multi-Level Garage Part of Proposed Plan to Improve Parking Near OPRF High School

The Village has joined School District 200 in proposing a parking management plan for the neighborhood that would be anchored by a multi-level parking garage on vacant Oak Park-River Forest High School property north of Lake Street just south of the field house.

“Parking near the high school has been a long-standing issue both for teachers who have to compete with students for limited on-street parking and residents who must contend with cars parked along their properties on school days and during night and weekend activities,” said Village Trustee Gus Kostopulos, Parking and Traffic Commission liaison.

“The Village Board and staff have worked diligently to manage the limited parking supply in the area. But regulations can only go so far when demand exceeds supply to the extent that it now does in the area. The most viable long-term solution is to create additional parking with a garage.”

Village Manager Carl Swenson said discussions have been underway with high school officials for some time about creating additional parking space for teachers, as well as for the public when school is not in session and during special events.

He said Village staff is recommending a broad parking management plan that, in addition to a parking facility, envisions daytime student permit parking in the Pilgrim Church parking lot now used by teachers, new on-street permit parking for teachers along the school side of its perimeter and additional student parking on South Boulevard. The Village plan also would address the need for school bus parking and make a portion of the proposed garage available for overnight parking permits.

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OPRF Parking Plan
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“A garage alone will not completely solve the parking issues in the area,” Swenson said, pointing out that high school teachers and staff number more than 400. “By making the garage a component of a broader plan, we believe we can dramatically reduce the impact parking has on the surrounding neighborhood. Combined with the new Avenue Garage at North Boulevard and Euclid Avenue, the plan we are proposing could solve the parking problems for the entire area from Ridgeland Avenue to Oak Park Avenue.”

As currently proposed, the new garage would hold 300-plus cars on three levels, but would be engineered to support a fourth level should a future need arise. Construction is estimated to cost about \$4.1 million. The garage would be built on high school property and the district would contribute about \$400,000, with the Village funding the remainder.

“The issue of parking near the high school is a community one that requires a community solution,” Kostopulos explained. “Village government and the school districts are partners. Anything the Village can do to enhance our schools will create far-reaching benefits for everyone. This really is about how intergovernmental cooperation can enhance the quality of life for the entire community.”

No tax increases or revenue bonds would be needed to fund construction of a new garage at the high school, according to Swenson. Village development staff have proposed reallocating money currently budgeted to expand parking in the downtown shopping district to the high school project, then using Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds for the downtown expansion work.

“This is an excellent example of how the benefits of a TIF extend beyond its boundaries,” Swenson said. “Without revenue from the Downtown TIF, the Village would not even be able to consider building a parking facility at the high school at this time.”

Kostopulos pointed out that many of the details of the proposed parking plan remain to be worked out. Community input and review will be sought before any final plan goes to the Village and District 200 boards for approval, he said.

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Aerial View of Proposed Parking Plan

