

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL- Council Chambers
April 10, 2014
7 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair Linda Bolte; Commissioners Mark Benson, Jeremy Burton, Douglas Gilbert (arrived 7:02 p.m.), David Mann, Gail Moran, Greg Marsey, Steven Rouse

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Jacob Karaca, Plan Commission Attorney; Tammie Grossman, Development Customer Services Director; Jim Kelly, Citizen Involvement Commission; John Schiess, Architect for applicant; Paul Zimmerman and Jonathan Shack, Altierra Development Group

Roll Call

Chair Bolte called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and roll was called.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

Mr. Jim Kelly, 1043 S. Harvey Ave., and the chair of the Citizen Involvement Commission reminded commissioners to consider nominating a commissioner, chair or Village commission for the Outstanding Service Award. He said nominations were due by April 25, 2014 with a ceremony to take place sometime in late spring before a Village Board of Trustee meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Rouse motioned to approve the minutes from March 6, 2014. Commissioner Moran seconded. Commissioner Moran indicated a word change on page 3. The minutes were approved by a voice vote with the correction.

Public Hearing(s)

PC 14-02: Residences at Maple Place (1133 Chicago Avenue); The Applicant seeks approval of a Planned Development for a five story, eleven unit residential condominium building and twenty-two (22) first floor parking spaces with eight allowances from the Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Bolte reviewed the procedures for a Planned Development public hearing. She went over the standards and goals that the commissioners would use to base their decision. She said the commission would be respectful of time and try not to go beyond 10:30 p.m. or 11 p.m. and so a continuance could be possible.

Mr. Failor briefly gave an overview of the application. He said the zoning code required any development more than 10,000 square feet to automatically go through the Planned Development process. He said the applicant was asking for eight allowances from the zoning ordinance; as the development was in the B-1/B-2 district there were setback requirements for residential only developments. There were also variances requested for height, density, lot coverage, open space requirements and landscaping. Mr. Failor referred commissioners to the staff report detailing the requests. He noted that the Comprehensive Plan did not list residential uses within these districts, although the plan was written in 1990 when residential developments within commercial areas were not as widespread and that the Village was in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan.

He said the Chicago Harlem Business District Plan indicated a goal to attract and retain high quality business within the area and that plan recognized the need to improve the parking lot site but nothing specific was noted regarding redevelopment of the subject site when the plan was created. He said

residential development was an important component to the health of a business district and noted that the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation wrote a memorandum in support of the project.

Commissioner Moran asked for clarification on the easement from the property owner to the west. Mr. Failor said it was in response to a building code requirement that restricted openings on a property line. The easement would be above the first floor, which would restrict construction above the Doggie Day Care building. This would allow adequate air and light to the west-side windows of the application and provide adequate fire separation. A short discussion ensued regarding the requirement. Commissioner Burton asked if the allowances would be different should a commercial space be in place rather than residential. Mr. Failor replied the setbacks would be different but a variance would still be necessary for height, density, lot coverage and open space.

Attorney Karaca swore in the witnesses and those providing testimony.

Mr. John Schiess, 905 S. Home Ave. and the architect for the development introduced the Altierra Team. Mr. Paul Zimmermann, 543 S. Euclid Ave spoke first. He said he moved to Oak Park for the diversity and urban feel and the public school system. He was very involved with the Roosevelt Road Business Association and became involved in Berwyn's TIF committee and then became president of the RRBA association. He met Mr. Jonathan Shack through that organization. He said he appreciated Mr. Shack's developments in the surrounding area. He said Mr. Shack was born and grew up in Oak Park and moved back to the area and has worked as a general contractor since he was 18 years old.

Mr. Schiess went over the development presentation via a PowerPoint Presentation. He said the site presented some significant challenges- most significantly the depth was very shallow. The square shape of the site and the corner location made it unique and challenging for development. There was no alley; to the south was a private driveway owned by the building to the south. The building to the west sat on the property line, 20 feet high. He said the lot had sat undeveloped for five years because of the challenges the space presented.

Mr. Schiess reviewed the location site and noted the traffic diverter that allowed traffic to move north only on Maple Avenue. He said the B-1/B-2 wrapped around the R-5 district, which was residential. He pointed out the setbacks and the entrances on the presentation. He noted the site was only three properties from Harlem Avenue. He said the developers had come to an easement agreement with the property owners to the south for vehicle access to the private garages located in the rear of the building.

He went over the parking and egresses. He said they would not petition any change to the traffic flow on Maple Avenue. He said the inside floor plans were subject to change. They had designed them after consulting with Gloor Realty, which favored having larger units. Their target market would be current Oak Park residents who would like to downsize yet stay in the area.

Mr. Schiess showed elevations of the development and pointed out the cornice line of the building and how it was in line with the adjacent buildings. He stated that the building was designed with masonry in keeping with surrounding properties. He pointed out building material samples. He said the final materials would be noted on the plans should approval go forward. He said the first floor would have opaque panels that were back lit to follow the same rhythm of a retail space.

He said the building would be code compliant- this was due in part to the easement from the roofline up by the owner of 1135 Chicago Avenue in place even for future development. The window openings of the façade would not exceed a certain percentage, which they would work with Building and Property Standards to ensure.

Mr. Schiess said an issue that came up in the neighborhood meeting was there was no green space. He said the unique nature of the site put them in a situation where they had to ask for an allowance. A neighbor suggested a living wall, which meant adding a surface treatment to a wall that allowed for plantings to grow on that wall. The developer expressed interest in doing that, but some panels must remain transparent due to traffic egress, so the living wall would need to be on the East elevation.

He went over the shadow studies. Commissioner Moran asked which buildings across the street were vacant. Mr. Zimmerman said they were all leased across the street.

Mr. Schiess reviewed the allowances sought and went over the compensating benefits- one, diversity of housing. He said the development would fulfill a need as it would supply a housing stock that was not currently in Oak Park. Two, he said the development would generate \$180,000 in real estate taxes per year. Commissioner Moran questioned the financials in the application, which said there would be 13 units. Mr. Schiess said there would be ten units total with the same number of parking spaces, due to their market research that asked for larger units. Three, he said the residents' purchasing power would be an economic generator for the village as the residents would spend in the area. Four, the developer was committed to commissioning or providing a fund for public art, while the public walk, pavers and streetscape elements would be part of the offsite improvements. He said the property taxes would equal to 20 additional single family homes, but the condominiums would have less of an impact on schools, social services and police services than single family homes would.

He said the developer was trying to build quality homes, enhance the community through development, and support economic development with local ownership and local employment.

Chair Bolte wanted clarification on the number of units. Mr. Zimmerman said it would be ten units, with 22 parking spots. Commissioner Moran suggested having bike racks. Mr. Zimmerman agreed.

Mr. Jack Nowicki, a Realtor from Gloor Realty, also 222 N. Marion St., spoke as a witness for the applicant. He said they did a lot of research on this development and there was an incredible demand for local people to downsize from larger homes in Oak Park and River Forest at an older age while looking for one level and an elevator. He said they hold staff meetings each week and this type of housing need comes up at those meetings. He said he had seven children and most live in Oak Park and he has a commitment to the community that goes beyond the real estate. He doesn't believe the residents would use the schools. He said he was impressed by the amenities and the eco-efficiencies. Commissioner Moran asked what demographic wanted a 3,000 square foot condominium. Mr. Nowicki said someone from the area that would be downsizing, who lived in a significant home in Oak Park with three or four floors and was looking for way to stay in the area, but would need something they could manage physically; 50-75 years of age, many would still be employed but looking for different housing. Commissioner Rouse asked what existing building in Oak Park might be comparable. Mr. Nowicki said 222 North Marion Street was probably most comparable- it has some 3 bedrooms on market that sell very quickly. Commissioner Rouse asked if any were at the same price point. Mr. Nowicki said the River Forest development on Lathrop was comparable as it was newer construction.

Chair Bolte asked about the price point for the Opera Club units. Mr. Schiess replied the higher end was \$900,000. He said the Lathrop development sold very well. Commissioner Burton asked if there would be age restrictions. Mr. Schiess said none were planned. Chair Bolte said the report from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)- Homes for a Changing Region, suggested there was a need for this particular housing and asked the applicants if they knew what the report indicated. Mr. Schiess said they got a copy of the report from staff.

Chair Bolte asked the applicants to reply to the written questions that were sent by the Plan Commission via email that hadn't been addressed yet. Commissioner Rouse asked if the developers spoke with

adjacent building owners- Doggie Day Play and Dressel's Hardware, Mr. Zimmerman said he spoke with the owners of Dressel's, who wanted to stay neutral, as they were not against it, but they didn't want to alienate any customers who might be against it. Mr. Zimmerman indicated that he had not spoken with the owners of Doggie Day Play.

Chair Bolte asked if they were meeting with the Public Art Advisory Commission in May. Mr. Zimmerman agreed. Mr. Zimmerman went through the email questions that had not been addressed saying Mr. John Hedges from the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation would address retail rental rates. Mr. Zimmerman said the structural requirements for rooftop green space would be too expensive and they would have to pass that cost onto the units. Chair Bolte said there were two questions, one was a usable space for residents; one was for a green roof. Mr. Shack responded, saying the green roof would require the added structural requirements, but they were looking at different types of roof that might not require added structural elements. Commissioner Mann said this was relevant to open space, as green roofs were alternatives to open space requirements, green roofs helped to mitigate the heat island, and helped with water retention/evaporation. Mr. Shack agreed, and said they were looking at green roof options that would not compromise the structural requirements of the building. Mr. Schiess said the village's Public Works building had a vegetative roof that helped with storm water management and heat island and that would be a possibility to consider. Chair Bolte asked about the south easement. Mr. Shack said there was a shared agreement for both sides of the driveway with the owner to the south. Chair Bolte clarified there was no parking. Mr. Shack agreed. Chair Bolte asked about retail space on the first floor – about the possibility of using lifts for parking spaces and freeing up retail space on the first floor like at the Opera Club. Mr. Schiess said he inquired at the Opera Club and was told no one used the parking lifts as there was a perceived safety issue with them and no one wanted a car up above them. Chair Bolte said it appeared using lifts wouldn't allow the depth needed for retail. Mr. Schiess replied there was a standard minimum 40 feet depth for retail and if that was in place then there wouldn't be access to the parking spaces. He said the retail carve out for the SoHo Development was shallow and the space still hasn't been leased. He said the cost would set a lease price that would be set so high it would be difficult to capture. Mr. Zimmerman said the plan as submitted had parking within the structure – if you removed the parking for retail where would parking go?

Chair Bolte noted the applicant submitted a petition of signatures of businesses in support of the development including 1130 Chicago Ave., 1110 Chicago Ave., 1106 Chicago Ave., 1118 Chicago Ave., 1101 Chicago Ave., 417 N Marion St., 1107 Chicago Ave., and 1045 Chicago Ave. Mr. Schiess said the packet included 18 letters in support. Commissioner Marsey noted that the plan commission had also received letters in opposition to the project that were not in the application.

Chair Bolte called for a break at 8:45 p.m. The meeting resumed at 8:55 p.m.

Chair Bolte moved to public testimony. She said after public testimony they would move to continue the public meeting to April 24, 2014 at 7 p.m. likely in Council Chambers.

Mr. John Hedges, the Executive Director of the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation, said they had looked at this project and first they considered retail as it was in a retail area but in looking at the plot of land it became problematic. He said a 2007 or 2008 business plan for the area had it as a parking lot but since it was privately owned it wouldn't likely stay a parking lot. He said the cost per square foot for retail would be \$40 per foot and that was substantially higher than Lake Street and the surrounding Chicago Avenue area was around \$2 per foot. He said OPEDC was impressed by the property tax payoff and it was logical that this would be a development that would work in that area.

Chair Bolte moved to public testimony, beginning with those in favor of the application.

Ms. Sandra Sokol, 222 N. Marion St., said when she and her husband were looking to move from their house as empty nesters and needing to be on one floor with an elevator building, they looked in Oak Park

and it was difficult to find something in their price point. She said she was a long-time resident and found the commercial portion of the neighborhood has been neglected and this addition would be wonderful to Oak Park at large and would bring consumers to the commercial district. She doesn't believe the development would cause problems with traffic or create a negative impact to the area. She urged the commissioners to approve the variances sought.

Mr. Dan Pych, 1024 Ontario St. and also 425 N. Maple Ave., said they were glad to see something happening to the empty lot. He feared a strip mall would go in there with parking in the front that would add traffic. He said on Maple parking was tight. He said he liked the proposal and as he owned the property to the south, they came to an agreement on using the driveway. She said his wife is a longtime Realtor and believed there was a demand for this housing and liked that the parking was inside the building. Chair Bolte asked Mr. Pych to confirm there was an easement agreement. Mr. Pych agreed.

Mr. Kevin Allgood, 544 Woodbine Ave., said he has lived 7-8 years in the area and thought it was a great opportunity to do something different with a vacant parking lot. He said had breakfast with attorneys in the western suburbs and they said there was huge demand in those communities for developments like this. He said the developers had done an outstanding job making it look good in that area.

Mr. Steven Saraceno, 725 S. Kenilworth Ave., also the owner of multiple residential and commercial properties. He wanted opponents to keep an open mind because he lived at Oak Park Avenue and Madison Street where a controversial development took place. He was neutral on it and it was now a good looking building. He said he owns retail spaces and it was difficult to rent while with renting apartments there were questions about parking. He asked the board to consider it took a lot to run a business and run a property and the developers have a personal interest in it.

Chair Bolte asked for testimony from those opposed to project.

Mr. Robert Skinkle, 400 N. Maple Ave., said he was on the same block as the project. He has lived there for 18 years. He said he would've liked to see a view of the project from across the street in context with the area. He has a problem with the scale. He said scale was something everyone needed to consider. He said the variances and allowances strongly point to the problem of scale. He welcomes residential, but with this sort of change to the Harlem/Chicago Avenue plan you needed to look at the scale. He referred to an elevation and said it was outsized in nature.

Ms. Barbara Muccianti, 622 N Marion, said she was a third generation Oak Parker and had always lived in the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District. She said the building was too tall and had no architectural appeal and no green space. She said she doesn't understand why a downsizing couple would purchase a 3,000 square foot unit as it was larger than many houses. She worried the units would be vacant. She would like to see studies that show there were buyers with ample funds. She said she loved the trees and architecture of Oak Park so please not allow the application.

Mr. John Harmon, 1115 Paulina St., welcomed the development of an empty space but had questions on the streetscape and how it would fit in. He has real issues with scale as the variance was almost a third of the height, which was significant. He questioned the traffic flow, pedestrian safety and parking. He has problems parking in front of his house because of Chicago Avenue business employees parking there and he worried if visitors came from the development they would need parking. He said there was an unmarked pedestrian crosswalk there and it would make that area more complex.

Mr. Ugis Sprudz, 411 N. Maple Ave., said the neighborhood was very much alive and they cherished the streetscape. He said when looking at this project and the height, he was finding it hard to see how it would fit into the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District streetscape. He said this building would adversely affect

the visual appeal of the neighborhood and asked the development community to come forward with a project that wouldn't require the variances.

Mr. Mike Reust, 607 Belleforte Ave., said he was a resident for over 20 years. He said the two tallest buildings in the vicinity are only three stories high- this development seemed to be on steroids. He said it wouldn't fit in with other buildings in the business district. He said he opposed the setback variance, and without retail it would create a 'dead space' and would create a wedge between the east and west businesses. He doesn't like the blocky design and said it had no architectural interest and as a gateway to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio we could do better. He urged commissioners to walk around the area to get a sense of scale.

Ms. Monika Robinson, 408 N. Maple Ave., said they were a one-car family and moved to the area for that reason. She referenced a letter that she submitted to commissioners and staff that refers to the Chicago/Harlem business plan from 2008. She said the Envision Comprehensive Plan should look at land use that enhanced the area. She believed the proposed development did not strengthen the community as a whole because it requested eight variances. She referred commissioners to the pictures and said she'd rather have something fitting in scale and fitting to the character of the neighborhood.

Ms. Dea Fort, 641 Belleforte Ave., said she was a longtime resident of Oak Park. She said the Frank Lloyd Wright district was truly unique and there were no buildings taller than three stories, but there was a lot of trees and green space in the area. She said green space was important. She said the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio was important to the economy of the area. She said there were historic homes in the area and we all must strive to protect and preserve the history. She said the development would dwarf all the buildings and would not be the best use of the space.

Mr. James Beckwith, 1120 Chicago Ave. owner of FastFrame, across from the development. He said he would prefer a four story building rather than five. He said he has been told it was not financially viable and asked commissioners to have the applicants demonstrate why it was not viable. He said having people living across from the building would help him as a business owner, but he believed the building was too tall.

Ms. Amy Reed Hogrefe, 412 N. Maple Ave., presented comments from Mr. Vincent Freemont, who had left the meeting earlier. Mr. Freemont, of 407 N. Maple Ave. submitted comments from Oakpark.com both for and against the application. Ms. Hogrefe said she welcomed a residence on the block, but believed the scale was wrong for the neighborhood. She said at the neighborhood meeting she had asked about green space and was told that there wasn't room for green space, but she heard tonight about the living wall. She said she thinks that will be a few ivy plants, which was similar to her garage by the end of summer.

Ms. Colleen Campbell, 325 N. Maple Ave., said composition-wise the building wouldn't fit the block. She said it was a really important neighborhood and there was such a legacy and need to protect that legacy. She said the applicants were trying to maximize the real estate value, but would it really fit into the community. Also, green space was important in Oak Park. She said the real estate price seems very, very high. She said parking was very cramped on Maple due to employee parking from neighboring businesses. She said it was important to maintain the aesthetics of the neighborhood.

Mr. Adam Rosenthal, 420 N. Maple Ave., moved here last summer and lives directly across from the development. He assumed there would be a development there and inquired before moving and was told it was zoned for four stories. He said he lived in Chicago across from a five-story building and that's why they moved. Zoning was there for a reason. He's also concerned about the setback. He said he was not opposed to residential but preferred it followed the zoning code. He asked commissioners to consider if a

four-story development could go into that space. Commissioner Moran asked where his house was located. Mr. Rosenthal said directly next to the traffic diverter.

Ms. Suzanne Dubin, 544 Belleforte Ave., said she didn't want to give up on the retail environment. She said she uses the services in the area and loved the retail there. She said there would be a half block dead zone with the development and doesn't want to give up on the retail space.

Ms. Karen Gianfrancisco, 411 Forest Ave., said she wanted to talk about flexibility. She was born and raised here. She said she lived in the middle of Frank Lloyd Wright District and had hundreds of people walking in front of her house every day and it wasn't always that way. She thinks people should be open to the project. The Village needed to adapt to change to create business here. She said we needed to be prudent in supporting residential projects and this project made sense.

Chair Bolte closed the public testimony portion of the hearing.

Commissioner Marsey said as height was the most frequently stated objection; he wondered how tall the Opera House development was. Mr. Schiess said it was 6 stories. Commissioner Marsey said he was looking for context to the area. Mr. Schiess said 1040 Erie Street was a five-story building, a residential building with parking on ground floor, four levels of living and immediately adjacent to single family homes.

Commissioner Marsey asked staff if anything had been built on the site before. Mr. Failor said he had to look at historical documents. Commissioner Marsey asked for occupancy data for that business district. Mr. Failor said he could get it from the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation for the next meeting. Commissioner Marsey clarified that the Plan Commission could not ask the developers directly about the pro forma, only in the context of if the project has financing. Chair Bolte agreed.

Chair Bolte asked staff for parking lot usage information; Mr. Failor said he will get that for next meeting. Chair Bolte asked the applicants to get the information regarding housing demand from the Homes for a Changing Region report and give to staff. Commissioner Benson asked about trash pickup routes. Mr. Schiess clarified the dumpsters would be rolled out to the trucks. Commissioner Benson wanted information on the size of the units proposed versus what was currently available and comparable. Mr. Schiess said they would provide that information.

Commissioner Mann questioned if the parking decks could be smaller as the first floor was very tall. Mr. Schiess replied the first floor was that height because of the building to the west- so that the windows were not blocked on the second floor. Mr. Shack clarified it was also to maintain the façade line of the buildings to the west. Commissioner Mann said façade design doesn't have to align with the floors inside the building. Mr. Schiess said he was open to that possibility.

Commissioner Moran said when driving west on Chicago Avenue during rush hour it would be very difficult for residents to turn left. Chair Bolte said Village Engineer Jim Budrick replied to that question saying the Village could look at traffic patterns after six months and perhaps make it a right turn only during busy times. Chair Bolte suggested getting more information from Mr. Budrick for the next meeting if necessary.

Commissioner Gilbert wanted clarification on the ground floor opaque panel windows indicated as well as material for the panel on the transom area above the ground floor. Commissioner Gilbert asked staff how old the Giordano's building was. Mr. Failor later replied it was built in 1924 with alterations in 2003. Commissioner Gilbert asked about the LEED waiver request. Mr. Failor said staff indicated as it was a smaller development and expensive to register with the USGBC, staff approved a waiver of the

requirement, but the developer would still have to look for a third-party person to make sure it had met the LEED points without having to register with the USGBC.

Commissioner Moran said she was uncomfortable that some parts of application didn't conform to what the applicant was proposing in terms of the units. Mr. Failor said the applicant would have to provide updated information before it was sent onto the Village Board.

Commissioner Gilbert asked if the parking was to be deeded to units or common. Mr. Shack replied they would be deeded. Commissioner Gilbert asked about the two extra parking spaces. Mr. Shack said they hadn't figured that out yet. Commissioner Gilbert suggested creating a common space or usable space in the window to help with the ground level wall 'dead space' on Chicago Avenue. Mr. Shack said they would consider that. Chair Bolte suggested it could be something the public could look at as they walk by. Mr. Zimmerman said one of the possible public art contributions they were considering may be the glass along there and they were meeting with the Public Art Advisory Commission on that. Commissioner Gilbert suggested something that would tie pedestrian traffic along the big space but enliven it with artistic articulation. He also suggested an element of fabric awnings over the window space. Mr. Shack agreed to consider it.

Commissioner Rouse motioned to continue the hearing until April 24, 2014. Commissioner Gilbert seconded. A roll call vote was taken:

Rouse- yes
Gilbert-yes
Benson-yes
Burton - yes
Moran- yes
Mann- yes
Marsey- yes
Bolte-yes

The motion passed 8-0.

Other Business

Chair Bolte said the Board of Trustees did not accept the Plan Commission's recommendations on medical cannabis distribution centers. Instead, they decided to adhere to state restrictions. A name has been put forward for the vacant plan commissioner spot and hopefully will be approved at the next Village Board meeting.

Chair Bolte said it would likely be late June or early July for the Comprehensive Plan hearing. Mr. Failor invited commissioners to a public meeting to discuss the Village's permit and licensing software replacement on Wednesday, April 16 and Thursday April 17, 2014. Ms. Tammie Grossman, Director of Development Customer Services, explained the village was in the process of replacing the software used for permitting and inspections and have hired a consultant to do a process audit. She said one of the processes under review was how the Plan Commission received planned development documents and they would like feedback on this at these public hearings.

Mr. Failor said consultants hired to update the bicycle plan would be slated to speak to the Plan Commission on May 1st or May 12th. Chair Bolte suggested holding that presentation on May 1st at 6:30 p.m. for not more than an hour so that the commission could move onto the public hearing shortly after.

Adjournment

Commissioner Rouse motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Moran seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 10:44 p.m.

Angela Schell,
Recording Secretary