

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL- Room 101
May 22, 2014
7 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair David Mann; Commissioners Mark Benson, Jeremy Burton, Mark Gartland, Douglas Gilbert, Greg Marsey (departed at 7:13 p.m.), Gail Moran, Steven Rouse

EXCUSED: Commissioner Mark Benson

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Jacob Karaca, Plan Commission Attorney; Tammie Grossman, Development Customer Services Director; John Schiess, architect for Altierra Development Group and JCSD, LLC; Paul Zimmerman and Jonathan Shack, Altierra Development Group; Michael Streit, JCSD, LLC

Roll Call

Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll was called.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

None.

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. **Continued from May 15, 2014.**

Chair Mann opened the revote and asked if Commissioner Burton had reviewed the video and public testimony. Commissioner Burton agreed. Commissioner Burton reminded commissioners to ensure their microphones were on as it helped when viewing any video recording of meetings.

Commissioner Burton asked if there were any design revisions by the applicant. Mr. John Schiess, architect for the project, explained the design was as presented at the prior meeting. Commissioner Burton confirmed the number of garage spaces as 22 parking spaces. Commissioner Burton asked if the Board of Trustees would get all of the materials to review. He commented for the record that there was a workable solution with reducing the building height by using the extra parking spaces for storage. The windows on the 2nd floor would be a problem of the applicants' own making and the ideal way would be to get rid of the mezzanine level. He said the majority of the opposition was to the height and it was a well-founded opposition as it did seem too high for the area that it was in. Commissioner Burton said the Plan Commission's mission was to herald development of the Village and as much as he'd like to see a change on the project it was not enough for him to vote against it. He believed the legitimate problems could be solved and that would be his recommendation to the trustees.

Commissioner Moran motioned to approve the application as presented on May 15, 2014 with the following conditions: a six month traffic study, third party LEED standard certification, installing bike racks, installing a 3-inch green roof, working with the Public Art Advisory Commission on installing art glass windows on Chicago Avenue with insurance to insure that art work, abiding by ordinance 12-4-4,

creating the street improvements and planters as noted in the application, ensuring that construction debris be kept on property site and removed regularly, ensuring the project was developed in conformity with the plans as modified on May 15, 2014, that no truck traffic be allowed south of the Maple Avenue traffic diverter, that the applicant provide a list of exterior building materials approved by the Board, that the applicant post a sign and phone number that neighbors can call with questions about construction, that if the applicant fails to comply with the restrictions and conditions that the Village take appropriate action. Commissioner Rouse seconded.

A roll call vote was taken:

Moran- yes

Rouse- yes (he said he was placing special emphasis on the letter submitted by Alioto's and the photograph showing conditions of the current site)

Gilbert- no

Benson- absent

Gartland – no

Marsey- yes

Burton – yes

Mann – yes

The application passed with a vote of 5-2.

Commissioner Marsey departed at 7:13 p.m. Chair Mann confirmed that Commissioner Marsey would be reviewing the evidence from tonight's hearing via video recording and handouts.

PC 14-04: Oak Park Oasis (317 Home Avenue and 1025 Randolph Street Rear); The Applicant seeks approval of a residential Planned Development for one single family residence and twenty-two townhome dwelling units located on 317 Home Avenue and the parking lot adjacently west across the public alley with six (6) allowances from the Zoning Ordinance; Setbacks - Front Yard – 20 required / 10 proposed; Rear Yard – 25 required / 10 proposed; and Side Yards – 10 required / 4 proposed; Lot Coverage – 45% allowed / 46% proposed; and Land Use – Townhomes are not a permitted use in the R7 Multiple Family District.

ALLEY VACATION: The Applicant is also requesting the approval of an alley vacation for that portion of alley between the single family residential lot and parking lot adjacently west as described above.

Chair Mann reviewed the procedure for the hearing. Attorney Karaca explained there were two separate public hearings – he went over what an alley vacation was and said the Board would need to make the official finding on the alley vacation, but the Plan Commission should issue a recommendation.

Mr. Failor went over the staff report. He explained the planned development process. He said the property was located in the R-7 district which allowed for single family, two family and multifamily homes, but not townhomes. So, the applicant was requesting relief to allow townhomes at the development site. As the property was in Ridgeland Oak Park Historic District, the Historic Preservation Commission would be reviewing the proposal and issue a report back to the Plan Commission at the June 5, 2014 Plan Commission meeting. Mr. Failor explained that there were six allowances requested for setback requirements, lot coverage and land use. He said the applicant did not have to provide a traffic study, but they would need to review records in the village engineering department and referred commissioners to a memo from the Village Engineer. Mr. Failor said a parking study was not required as the development provided two spaces per unit, but that staff had asked the applicant to provide information on the displaced parking from the development. The applicant did not have to provide LEED certification, but was required to hire a third party to ensure they met the LEED points. He said the area was residential and

zoned for multifamily. The Oak Park Economic Development Corporation (OPEDC) had submitted a letter of support in the packet.

Mr. Failor referenced the second application was for the alley vacation- the relief was only for a portion of the alley between 317 Home Avenue and the YMCA parking lot. He said the applicant was providing an easement on the property in perpetuity so it would function the same as today: the public could drive across it, and the applicant was proposing lighting and brick paving improvements to the alleyway. He said the compensating benefits were improving the alley west from Randolph to Washington and adding a pedestrian walkway from Randolph to Washington along the north side of the property.

Mr. Failor said he'd received an email from the fire department that they were pleased that the developer had indicated they would provide sprinklers to all units. The fire department typically does not bring trucks down alleys so they were pleased with the fire suppression system. He said the Village Engineer looked at the roadways and said the western alley needed improvement and was on the 5 year Capital Improvements Plan to do so. The other alleys were in OK shape and not expected to be replaced as part of the development unless there was damage done during the construction process. Utilities indicated there was capacity for public utility. Chair Mann clarified that the Village Engineer's email indicated there were grade issues in the alleyway. Commissioner Rouse suggested adding a condition to grade the alleyway as part of the recommendation.

Attorney Karaca swore in the applicants. Mr. Schiess presented the application, saying currently 169 parking spaces were used jointly by the YMCA and also leased out individually and in bulk to building owners. Commissioner Moran asked if they had a breakdown of the parking numbers. Mr. Schiess said he didn't have specific numbers.

Mr. Schiess explained that with the alley vacation, there would be no obstruction above or below ground with utilities or movement through the property with only the maintenance transferred to being part of the development or association. Commissioner Rouse clarified liability would also transfer, Mr. Schiess agreed.

Mr. Schiess said it would be a circle of townhomes surrounding a courtyard with a water feature. The green spaces would be private green spaces. Vehicle access would be via the four alleys. He said the link between the two properties would have colored stamped concrete with a brick look, while overhead would be a light canopy. Schiess said the current site was 100% impervious material while the development would add green and brown spaces, adding to the perviousness of site. Mr. Schiess said the light canopy would be tall enough to allow unobstructed vehicle flow but would create a feature to "name" the place. Also, the alleys will have street names.

Mr. Schiess said the townhomes would be wider and longer than a typical townhome to keep them at three levels rather than four. All would have access to a roof deck. The square footage would be about 2850 versus a standard townhome of 2400 square feet. He referred commissioners to the landscape plans with detailed plantings and exterior elevations.

Mr. Schiess said private ambulances may go down the alleys so some of the side yards may be reduced. He reviewed the shadow studies, saying the development would not encroach on neighbors any more than existing properties, such as a garage. He discussed the traffic route for construction, but said the building department would review it for final approval.

Mr. Schiess said the allowances were low impact as the parking goes right to the line, the development would be adding back more open space. He said the lot coverage allowance was asking for .7% lot coverage relief which was low, but they were also adding to permeability of the current site. The

townhomes not being permitted as a use was an anomaly in the code, and he said staff noted in the report that it was a logical transition from single family to multifamily housing.

Mr. Schiess said he has reached out to the manager of BonVilla, a large building that currently leases parking in the development site. He said he has agreed to work with them to locate some off-street parking. He said their agreement with the YMCA was that they would seek alternatives for their parking as well. He said he's identified 53 parking spaces so far and believes it would be good to coordinate with the Village's parking department to locate more. He said in addition to the sprinkler system, they would be installing two fire hydrants on the site. Commissioner Moran clarified ingress would be on Washington Boulevard for construction traffic. Mr. Schiess acknowledged a boulevard doesn't allow for truck traffic, but they would work with the building department as Randolph Street was a narrower street and has much more pedestrian traffic. Commissioner Rouse asked what could be built at right without any variances. Mr. Schiess said 64 units for rental or sale, 96 Parking spaces and 45 feet tall, but they would need an alley vacation for anything other than a parking lot. He said the proposed development would be 22 units, 44 parking spaces and 40 feet tall.

Commissioner Gartland asked how pedestrians would enter the property. Mr. Schiess said they would enter via areas in the alley that were paved distinctly in shape and color. Commissioner Gilbert said the provided light feature was at the north-east corner but the proposed walkway was in the west alley. Mr. Schiess clarified there would be lighting from the north to south side. Commissioner Gilbert asked what the setbacks for existing properties surrounding the site were. Mr. Schiess said he estimated on the east it was about 4-6 feet on the property for garages but he did not know the west side. Commissioner Gilbert said it would be good to know this for the next meeting.

Commissioner Gilbert asked where employees of the Y would be parking. Mr. Schiess said that was still under discussion and not confirmed as of yet.

Mr. Schiess went over the comprehensive plan goals and said the development did not need to meet every goal but follow the spirit of it. He said townhomes were a unique prototype and provided diverse housing. He said at the SOHO development, 4 townhomes were sold in one weekend and there was a lack of inventory for new construction townhomes in Oak Park. They were an enhanced quality of housing that wouldn't require yearly maintenance, and referenced the OPEDC letter that said a parking lot does not enhance residential character.

Mr. Schiess said they were locating the development in an area with a high walkability score, within walking distance to public transportation. He said the development will increase the tax base by bringing in \$250,000 additional tax revenues each year, adding resident purchasing power and provide \$8 million in new construction. Commissioner Rouse asked about the proposed selling prices- Mr. Schiess said the range would be low-\$500,000 to \$600,000. Commissioner Rouse asked about conditions to financing. Mr. Schiess said they were working with a local bank to finance but with a townhouse project it could be done in phases. Commissioner Rouse asked about the timing and ability to start the project. Mr. Schiess said financing wouldn't be a hurdle to start. Commissioner Rouse asked for the financing parameters. Mr. Michael Streit, from JCSC, LLC clarified they could do the first phase in cash, how large the phase would depend on presales. Commissioner Rouse asked if there had been any presales. Mr. Streit replied they had not started marketing the project. Chair Mann asked how many phases they estimated. Mr. Schiess replied four, but the market would determine that. Commissioner Rouse asked that the applicant amend their proposal with a construction timeline. Mr. Streit said presales would drive how many units would be built in the first phase and also how quickly. Commissioner Rouse said they had not provided any feedback on potential buyers. Mr. Schiess referred commissioners to a letter from Gloor Realty. Chair Mann said it would be good to get a four phase construction timeline. Mr. Failor clarified that a planned development would have a set time limit. Commissioner Rouse asked if they could apply for extensions. Mr. Failor agreed.

Mr. Schiess said they hosted a neighborhood meeting on April 8, 2014 to get feedback and they hoped to continue the conversation with neighbors. He said they were pledging to assist in the search for parking solutions. Mr. Schiess reviewed the compensating benefits including offsite improvements, alley repaving and a contribution to public art as well as improving an underutilized property. He said the OPEDC asked that developers take a creative approach to zoning issues and these would provide larger units, which were rare in the Oak Park market. It was a creative and optimal use of an underutilized space, it would have little impact on congestion, and it would be a real estate tax generator.

Mr. Schiess said he has identified two lots at 1033 and 1035 Pleasant where there were 27 parking spaces ready to be leased. He said Lutheran Family services also had available spaces that would total 53 spaces.

Chair Mann opened public testimony. Attorney Karaca swore in those wanting to testify.

Mr. Brian Lantz, 305 N Home Ave., said he was impressed with the applicant as the townhomes were sensitive to the neighborhood context and not visible to the street. Having unit owners that would have a stake in the neighborhood made sense especially because the development was hidden and out of view. Some neighbors have concerns about the shade for gardens but overall the development was sensitive to the character of the neighborhood. He said a townhome was a nice transition from a single family to the dense multifamily development. He does not want to see a lot of additional parking along Home Avenue. Commissioner Moran asked if knew the uses of the multifamily buildings surrounding the donut. Mr. Lantz replied condos, BonVilla was apartments, there were apartments at the end of block, along Washington were rental and a mix on Wisconsin of single family and condos.

Ms. Julie Lloyd, 315 Home Ave., said it was an underutilized property, an eyesore with no upkeep with sink holes. She said there has been drug activity going on there, and as she has young children the development would be a huge improvement. She was appreciative that it will decrease the traffic in the alley and liked the idea of adding to the property tax base.

Ms. Leslie Lauderdale, 1038 Washington Blvd., handed out a letter with photos to commissioners, said she opposed the setback allowances and the townhome allowance. She said she has reservations about the alley vacation. She referred commissioners to the photos of the different setbacks as comparisons. She said this winter at the unsold townhome development at South and Home no one took care of the sidewalks. She said condominium law allowed for protections that townhomes do not provide. She said condominium associations provide a legal structure and documentation that the developer needed to follow; it would set the homeowners association off to a financial start and also if unfinished, it would clearly delineate who pays property taxes and who maintains upkeep.

Ms. Patricia Malespin, 1037 Randolph St., a long time condo owner, said there were 5 parking spaces for 8 units at their building and they have been renting from the YMCA three spaces, she was concerned what would happen to those who have to park. She would like help in finding parking spaces.

Ms. Denise Walsh, 320 Home Ave., was proud to live in a historic district and has concerns about allowing townhomes. She said using all the space would take away from other parking and would create a lot of congestion and traffic on Home Avenue. She said she was not sure how school buses would get down the alley. She's concerned about the timing, as along the SOHO development she fell on the unmaintained sidewalk. She was worried that 317 Home Ave. would be sold off or removed. She said there were vacant projects that would meet the housing needs in the Village. She said the parking would be displaced in a high density area.

Ms. Kathleen Noonan, 1000 Pleasant St., said this was the wrong location for this development, and it was the failure of YMCA to maintain the property and security. She said there were too many variances,

and it was a bad idea to give up the alley. Also, appending the two properties was wrong. She said the developer does not have a good record within the Village.

Ms. Lea Larsen, 1024-1030 Randolph St. property manager, she said they rent 22 spaces in the YMCA lot. She contacted the Village's parking services department and they did not have any spaces in the vicinity. She said there were two lots for night parking and no 24-hour parking lots in the area.

Chair Mann called for a break at 8:48 p.m. The meeting resumed at 8:59 p.m.

Ms. Lisa Kilbridge, 1046 Washington Blvd., said the tax revenue created would be spent out. She said the development would be blocking off the west alley for Wisconsin and she was concerned it would be blocked as she parks parallel now to the garage. She said the visibility would be low in the alley and the development would increase pedestrians.

Mr. Ben Levy, 1046 Washington Blvd., said the problem was parking as the lot houses YMCA employees and residents around there. Parking was difficult and guests would need parking as well. He said certain streets like Washington and Wisconsin have no overnight parking. He was concerned about the project as it was similar to stalled projects in the past but in a worse location.

Ms. Stephanie McCray, 406-410 Wisconsin Ave., was concerned about parking. She said it was not the developer's responsibility to replace parking but the Plan Commission needed to consider it and people were parking closer and closer together and it felt dangerous. She said parking was not casual and needed to be taken seriously with a structured plan.

Chair Mann clarified that the Plan Commission had been forwarded this for a recommendation to the Village Board, but parking ultimately would be a part of the Village Board's decision.

Mr. Jerry Reese, 312 Home Ave., said he attended the April 8th meeting and said there was no mention of 317 Home Ave. He said parking was a big problem in the area. He was not familiar with the statutes regulating townhomes. He said if the development was allowed, they must consider that you have to take the snow away because there was no place to put snow now. This winter exemplified the problem. He asked if the village will allow people to park on Home Avenue while construction was going on. He said the project will create havoc for people living there with all the trucks, and they needed to have structured parking along the street. He said Home Avenue takes a lot of traffic from Harlem Avenue and he was worried that they would tear down 317 Home or making it a park. He wanted to see a letter from the fire department that they could fight a fire in the area.

Mr. David Rogner, 1042 Washington Blvd., was concerned about parking. He said he bought his condo because there was off-street parking available in the lot and he was concerned about the value of his condo if the lot were not available. He asked that the commission please consider the needs of people who park in that space.

Mr. Matt Panfil, 1037 Pleasant St. Unit 1A, said he was a client of the parking lot and a certified planner. He wanted to know if it would be one or two lots and was not sure if the ordinance would allow for one lot, but if it were two lots then there was no street frontage. He asked if there was guest parking would there be sufficient room for people to maneuver; he asked for a photo metric plan so no glare issues from the project. He said in the comprehensive plan if the development was displacing off-street parking then it was to be replaced with off-street parking. He said the commission should look at the surrounding context of the environment.

Mr. Clif Wilson, 309 Home Ave., supports the project, as his property backs up to the parking lot. He said the proposed development was excellent compared to some of the proposals they have heard through the years.

Chair Mann closed the public testimony and opened commissioner deliberations.

Commissioner Gilbert asked about guest parking and if the private slab outside the garage parallel to garage opening could be used. Mr. Schiess said the aprons could house short-term parking for guests or service people. Mr. Gilbert said there were a lot of questions about common areas and common ownership. Mr. Schiess said the units would be sold fee simple; the owners would own the property from the ground up and some green space outside property and then there would be limited common elements. He said the organization would manage the common areas and provide legal structure for ownership including the alley portion. Upon village approval there would be a subdivision plan. Mr. Schiess said in regards to snow removal, public works treats alleys as tertiary roads, so the association would remove snow from all four alleys to provide access for residents and there would be a maintenance contract for that removal. Commissioner Burton suggested it was a compensating benefit if all alleys were being cleared. Mr. Schiess agreed. Commissioner Burton asked if the homeowner at 317 Home would be a part of the homeowner's association. Mr. Schiess replied no.

Commissioner Gilbert asked for clarification on how 317 Home Ave. fit into the development. Mr. Schiess said there would be no limitations on the purchase or sale of 317 Home and as the home was in the Historic District, it would have to abide by Village regulations. Mr. Schiess said it was a legal structure; they were co-applicants in the application, but there was no plan to put in a driveway or walkway other than adding lights. Commissioner Gilbert said he was concerned about the construction process and displacing people and blocking access to the alley. Mr. Schiess said any blockage would be only during the period of repaving the alley all other times it would be a point of access. He said they would notify homeowners of any temporary displacements. Commissioner Gilbert asked if they owned the title or the option to purchase the lot. Mr. Schiess said they were under contract to purchase. Commissioner Gilbert said they could feasibly not renew the parking leases. Mr. Striet said they were free to manage the property.

Commissioner Moran asked if it was one versus two lots. Mr. Schiess said would be one zoning lot that would go through a Plat of Subdivision. Commissioner Moran said although they were not asking for a parking variance she would be in favor knowing who was parking where now and they could send a message to the Village Board so that parking could be secured. Commissioner Burton asked how many spaces were currently rented. Mr. Schiess said he didn't know the rent roll but believed it was above 53 spaces. Commissioner Moran said she went by the lot and while there was a lot of parking it was not at capacity. Mr. Schiess agreed but said some spaces were not rented and there wasn't policing or towing. Commissioner Burton clarified the 317 Home Ave. owner would quit claim the property to the association. Mr. Schiess agreed. Commissioner Rouse clarified there would be no blocking of alley access due to an easement. Mr. Schiess agreed. Commissioner Gartland asked what was expected from the fire department. Mr. Failor referred commissioners to the email that indicated fire trucks would not go down the alley as it would be too close to a fire, but installing a fire suppression system was a great benefit to the residents. The fire department indicated it would give them time to get to the houses from a staging area on Washington or Randolph. Commissioner Moran asked for more information than they've received. Commissioner Gilbert suggested the fire department already has a fire fighting plan for alleys or garages or for properties close to an alley, so in this sense it was not much different.

Commissioner Moran asked if there was a plan to meet LEED points and requested a draft. Mr. Schiess said they've accepted the condition to have a third party LEED certifier. Chair Mann said for the exterior lighting plan there weren't any photo metric values. Mr. Schiess said they were looking to do that in final engineering portion of the application. Chair Mann said he had concerns about the globe night fixtures.

Mr. Schiess said there was a night safety globe available to submit. Chair Mann agreed that directing the light to the ground surface rather than expanded up to sky. Chair Mann asked if this would set a precedent for a development of this size going through an arrangement with no street frontage. Mr. Failor agreed.

Chair Mann clarified the units on the north and south sides would have smaller aprons so the guests would need to park off-site. Mr. Schiess agreed.

Mr. Schiess said in regard to testimony regarding failed or stalled projects; those projects were due to bank failure. He said SOHO was a failed development due to a meltdown in the credit and real estate market; it was not an attribute of the development. He said a new developer has come in and closed four units in one weekend. He said the financial realities were different today than in 2007 and banks were lending and the credit market was different.

Commissioner Gartland asked what commissioners could consider regarding parking when the developer was not required to find parking. Mr. Failor said it was correct that the zoning code does not require an applicant to provide parking for displaced vehicles but there was a concern that there was a parking issue in the vicinity; commissioners could send a message to the Board in the findings of fact about that issue. Mr. Failor said it was a private property deal, not a Village-owned parking lot and the developer was not asking for parking allowances. He suggested the Board could direct the parking services department to help with locating parking, or the Board could ask the Transportation Commission to consider modifying restrictions in the area. Commissioner Rouse asked if the Plan Commission could ask for a recommendation to the Parking Commission. Mr. Failor agreed. Attorney Karaca said the applicant has to meet the vicinity standard and how it affects property around it. Commissioner Burton suggested adding a condition of snow removal.

Ms. Joanne Lewandowski, 314 Home Ave., said she fights every year with the Village and McCadam Landscaping as they dump snow and build snow walls in the alleys. She said there was congestion in the area.

Chair Mann asked for additional information from the fire department, Historic Preservation Commission, and parking numbers and to continue the meeting to June 5, 2014. Commissioner Gilbert said he wouldn't be at the June 5th meeting and said he felt the biggest issue was parking. He said the Village needed to identify locations where people could park or expand on-street parking areas. He said he would stress strongly to the board to tell the parking staff and commission that it should be dealt with. Commissioner Gilbert said it could reduce property values to those properties that rely on parking from that lot. Commissioner Gilbert said there was a market for these units, and would allow relief for townhomes as it was a perfect development to go in that site as lower density than zoning allowed. He said it was a good transition from single family to multifamily. He said the setbacks were based on single family homes so the allowances were reasonable given the location. Commissioner Gilbert said he didn't see objections other than the board looking at the parking issue.

Chair Mann continued the meeting to June 5, 2014 Plan Commission meeting.

Commissioner Rouse motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Burton seconded. A voice vote was taken. The meeting adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Angela Schell,
Recording Secretary