

MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION  
VILLAGE HALL- COUNCIL CHAMBER  
July 2, 2015  
7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair David Mann; Commissioners Mark Benson, Jeremy Burton, Garret Eakin, Mark Gartland, JoBeth Halpin and Monica Sanders (arrived at 7:05 p.m.)

EXCUSED: Commissioners Douglas Gilbert and Greg Marsey

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Bill McKenna, Village Engineer; Jacob Karaca, Plan Commission Attorney; Andy Stein, Clark Street Developments; Ryan McBride and Jonathan Kubow, Lennar Multifamily Communities; Mike De Rouin, FitzGerald Associates Architects; Javier Millan, KLOA; Ernie Wong, Site Design Group; Rick Sinnott of Eriksson Engineering Associates

**Roll Call**

Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Chair Mann welcomed new Commissioners Halpin and Sanders and thanked former Commissioner Steven Rouse for his service. Roll was called. A quorum was present.

**Non-Agenda Public Comment**

None.

**Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Benson moved to approve the minutes from March 5, 2015. Commissioner Gartland seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously upon submission. Commissioner Benson moved to approve the minutes from March 9, 2015. Commissioner Burton seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously upon submission.

**Public Hearing(s)**

**PC 15-02: Planned Development; Oak Park Station (1123-1133 Lake Street / 1133-1145 Westgate / 1100 North Boulevard);** The Applicant seeks approval of a two-building, multi-story, mixed use planned development with 271 residential rental units, 26,000 square feet of retail, 428 public parking spaces, a private pedestrian bridge across Westgate and a new public street (Maple Avenue).

Chair Mann reviewed the process for the public hearing. He said the meeting would likely end around 10 p.m. and be continued to July 9, July 16, and July 28 if necessary.

Chair Mann explained the cross examination procedure.

Commissioner Eakin read a statement in regards to an article published in the Wednesday Journal on May 27, 2015 about the Colt development site. He said he writes a monthly architectural column for the Wednesday Journal newspaper that contains his opinions. He said this would not impair his ability to serve on the Plan Commission or to take part in fair and impartial deliberations for this hearing.

Mr. Failor reviewed the application submitted by the applicant. He said they were requesting two allowances from the zoning code in regards to density and height.

Attorney Karaca swore in the applicants.

Mr. Andy Stein, applicant, introduced team members and thanked commissioners.

Mr. Mike De Rouin, architect, showed a short movie of the envisioned project and gave a presentation of the application with elevations of the development. He said the site was a walker's paradise and all forms of transit were available to residents. They looked at Lake Street for scale and used context when designing the project. He said the streetscape would have concrete sidewalks, a red brick area for pausing or benches and bluestone curbs to match the Lake Street streetscape plans. The lighting would be scaled and consistent with the Marion Street palate.

Mr. De Rouin showed the ingress and egress for each building and reviewed the anticipated traffic flow. He reviewed the number of units and retail spaces for each building, with 271 residential units and 26,000 square feet for retail. The parking garage would have 428 spaces.

He reviewed the building materials as noted in the application. He said construction would start in November, pending approval, with occupancy approximately 18 months from now.

Mr. Failor said proper notice was followed by the applicant for the public hearing. He said three letters of support have come in for the development: one from Downtown Oak Park; one from the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation; and one from Heitman, which oversees the Shops of Downtown building. He said the Public Art Advisory Commission also submitted a memorandum regarding the public art portion of the application.

Mr. Failor reviewed the staff report. He noted that staff used the goals and objectives from the Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Master Plan while evaluating the project. The application would encourage mixed-use development in the area, be a transit-oriented development and it would improve traffic flow with the addition of the new street. The development would be LEED certified. It would add an appropriate level of retail and residential for the area. The parking garage would be shared between the residents and the general public and the project would meet the zoning code requirements for parking. The Village adopted the Homes for a Changing Region Report in 2012, which considers the housing needs in our community. The report stated that 847 multi-family homes could be absorbed in Oak Park between now and 2030. This development would help fulfill that need. He said staff was in support of the application.

Mr. Failor said the village would own the parking structure, but the developer would operate it. Mr. Stein said a garage operating agreement would be finalized at a later date and no commuter parking would be allowed in the garage. Commissioner Halpin asked if the applicant needed to make up for the 181 parking spots that would be lost from the surface lot removal. Mr. Failor said the commercial and residential spots would be shared, so when residents were not using the spaces, the spaces would be available to the public.

Mr. Bill McKenna, Village Engineer, said the current surface lots on the project location were meant to be temporary lots from the removal of the prior buildings and were never meant to be permanent lots. He said there were challenges to the site in terms of traffic, but they were confident in the traffic analysis provided by the applicants. He said the impacts would be in the acceptable range. The egress to southbound traffic to Harlem was a concern but also within the acceptable range.

Mr. Floyd Anderson, an architect contracted to work with the Village, was asked to look at the design. He said from the northwest perspective, he believes the garage should be covered or completed with a similar quality as the front of the building. He said there was eclectic architectural along Lake Street and he'd like the architects to take a closer look at adjacent buildings and those designs and make minor revisions on the horizontal lines. The same for the Westgate Street façade, revisions could be made and the garage should also be covered. Overall, he suggested the development was attractive, though not groundbreaking, and it needed to be executed well with the materials and construction overseen properly.

Chair Mann moved to commissioners' questions on the presentations.

Chair Mann asked how would they keep residents from parking on the lower two floors, holding those spaces for the day, thus forcing the public to park on the upper floors. Mr. Ryan McBride said the intent would be to keep the garage open and parking would be mixing on the levels. Mr. Stein said the bridge would be key, as it would be on the second floor, so residents would park higher. Also, leases would indicate where residents should park. They would also create signage indicating short-term parking and no commuter parking would be allowed. Mr. McBride said the Village would own the garage, but they would lease it and there would be a profit-sharing with the village. The village would set the rates and it would operate like other village garages. Chair Mann suggested public parkers wouldn't want to circle through multiple floors and encouraged them to enforce resident parking on the higher levels. Mr. McBride agreed. Commissioner Benson agreed with Chair Mann, and asked if they could designate the ground floor for only short-term parking. Mr. McBride said the agreement with the village prevented nesting parking, but they would check to see if that was allowed. Mr. Stein agreed and said the garage operators would optimize the spacing.

Commissioner Burton asked about the current surface parking lots and if they were commuter oriented. Mr. Failor said only on the south side of the tracks. Commissioner Burton asked about demand for commuter parking. Mr. Failor said he could ask the parking director and get back with that information. Commissioner Burton suggested that would be a high demand area for commuter parking. Mr. McKenna said the closest commuter lot was South and Harlem and it was under capacity currently.

Commissioner Sanders said she was concerned losing the surface lots would make it less appealing to shop. She was also concerned about disability accessibility in the parking garage. Mr. De Rouin said the only way to keep the parking in the same location as the current surface lots would be to build a parking garage fronting on Lake Street. Mr. Stein said in talks with the village's parking services department, there were open spaces available to park downtown. Commissioner Sanders said she'd like to know how many spaces were available in the Holley Court garage and how those numbers changed after the surface lots were put in. Staff said they would get that information. Mr. De Rouin said they would comply with all federal and state laws on disability access.

Chair Mann asked about the anticipation of the number of cars for tenants versus what the zoning ordinance states. Mr. De Rouin said one of the drivers of the development was that it was steps to public transportation and so they anticipate a lot of their residents will be car-free, but they were comfortable with the zoning ordinance ratio.

Commissioner Burton asked about the pick-up and drop-off traffic along North Boulevard and how was that factored into the design. Mr. De Rouin said they decided against having the garage entrance on North Boulevard and the streetscape design was still underway.

Commissioner Gartland asked about entering the site from the east. Mr. McKenna said it would be either by coming from Marion Street or North Boulevard. Commissioner Gartland suggested having good signage to help drivers.

Chair Mann asked about the jog at Maple Avenue, why this would be ok when it causes pedestrian and traffic conflicts. Mr. Javier Millan said they agreed and they recommend an all-way stop control. Mr. Millan said they also recommend a visual, striking crosswalk marked with ladders rather than just straight lines. Chair Mann suggested a straight cross-walk rather than one at an angle. Mr. Millan said that could create confusion for the driver stopped if it were kept straight so they recommend the angle.

Commissioner Burton asked if Marion Street was designed to handle the additional traffic from development. Mr. McKenna said the pavement and infrastructure could handle it.

Commissioner Eakin asked if the paving would be brick like Marion Street. Mr. Failor said that was to be determined; once the board determines the Lake Street streetscape palate the development would match that as well. Commissioner Eakin asked about street lighting. Mr. Stein said the street lighting would also match the Lake Street streetscape palate.

Chair Mann asked about rental rates for the units and how would it address affordable housing needs in the village. Mr. McBride said the pricing has not been set but they have looked at the current existing rents in the market and they would keep it consistent with what the market would bear. Mr. Stein said the village determined there would not be an affordable housing requirement in the project. Commissioner Halpin said she was concerned that half of the village could not afford to rent a studio. Mr. McBride said they were comfortable with their pricing models and it was consistent with projects in similar communities.

Commissioner Burton asked why geothermal was not feasible. Mr. De Rouin said the depths they would have to drill were quite long and the building covered most of the site so any maintenance would be impossible to get to in the future. He said they would use a central heat pump system with a central plant, which was the most efficient system for a building this size. Commissioner Burton asked about mitigating any environmental issues. Mr. Stein said they would have a plan to remediate the north and south site with federal and state agencies and be remediated to the standards required by law.

Commissioner Sanders asked about the height and how it would impact the surrounding area. Mr. McBride said the change in height from a prior application was due to the functionality of the building and the parking garage as well as the cost and the time to complete. Mr. De Rouin said the shorter building would create a larger wall and would block more views and daylight, whereas a taller, thinner structure allowed for more daylight and was encouraged as part of the Greater Downtown Plan.

Commissioner Eakin said in his opinion the Westgate property was one of the most charming buildings in Oak Park; he asked what was the rationale for tearing it down. Mr. De Rouin said one of the challenges to converting old buildings was the structural obsolesces of the them and the Westgate building could not be easily adapted to the functionality of the new building. Commissioner Eakin asked about keeping the façade into the plan. Mr. De Rouin said they were not trying to replicate the building as it was too short compared to the garage and it would be hard to place a new structure above it with the façade in place.

Chair Mann said making the building connect better to the existing fabric was important. He asked if they would consider having the building step back at the fourth floor to fit the context on Lake Street better. Commissioner Eakin said the storefronts were a continuous wall. Mr. Stein said the intent was to have urban storefronts so that each were different, created by retailers. Commissioner Eakin said the brick wrapped around didn't make sense. Mr. De Rouin said the brick was to help separate and frame the different aspects of the building. Commissioner Burton asked how the paint would be applied on the aluminum garage panels. Mr. De Rouin said it would be factory-applied with a 20 year warranty.

Commissioner Benson said the parking garage looked like a wall of grey and it was an eyesore. Mr. De Rouin said it was difficult to render the texture and color of the garage and the complete context. Commissioner Burton suggested public art for the garage. Commissioner Sanders asked for examples of garages clad in the same fashion. Mr. De Rouin said they could provide that.

Chair Mann moved to cross examination.

Dr. Richard Simcox said his surgical practice was at 1126 Westgate and a loading dock would be located next to his practice. He asked how loud it would be, what the traffic flow was and said he was concerned about vehicles and deliveries. Mr. Stein said the dock would service retail and residents moving in and out. He said the depth for the retail dock could accommodate a 65-foot trailer where they could close the garage door, so the trailer would not be sticking out. He said the frequency would depend on the types of businesses that would go in. Mr. McBride said for residential moves, the summer months would be busier but the trucks would pull in completely out of the public way. Mr. Stein said they did study changing the location of the docks, but Lake Street and North Boulevard were too congested and Maple Avenue too narrow so Westgate was chosen. He said there would be sound and vibration insulation. Dr. Simcox said his practice's recovery rooms would abut the loading dock so sound and vibration was a concern. Mr. McBride said they needed to insulate for the residential units right above as well so that was a common goal. Dr. Simcox asked if there would be any environmental impacts from the differing heights of the buildings like snow or rain from the roof of the tall building onto the shorter building. Mr. De Rouin said there would be a one-story building between Dr. Simcox's building and the tall building and that would handle drainage and snow so there should be no impact. Dr. Simcox asked if the alley would be widened behind his building. Mr. Stein clarified that only the alley abutting east of 1118 Westgate would be widened. Dr. Simcox asked if there would be any consideration to add locaters for his building as it would be harder to find. Mr. McBride said they could add signage on the construction fencing for his business. After construction, they would be happy to discuss adding signage to the building or street.

Mr. Richard McNamara went next. Mr. McNamara asked for the average timeframe for Clark Street to complete projects. Mr. Stein said it would depend on the scope, scale and global economic events. Mr. McNamara asked if any other project had taken longer than this one. Mr. Stein said no. Mr. McNamara asked for the reasons why. Mr. Stein said in 2008 there was a recession that halted a majority of real estate investment; now they believe the situation merits a successful project for downtown Oak Park. Mr. McNamara asked him to recap their prior conversations. Mr. Stein said Mr. McNamara previously discussed selling his building; interest in the project being geothermal; interest in parking technologies; and interest in the development spanning further east to include more parcels and be a larger development. Mr. McNamara said he also had concerns about the congestion and workability of the service alleys. Mr. Stein agreed, and said they would have the appropriate conversations with businesses along Lake and Marion to ensure these concerns were addressed. Mr. McNamara asked if there would be any changes to the service alleys, outside of the widening of a section, to ensure proper workability and address any congestion. Mr. Stein said they have had many meetings with village staff and this proposal reflected those discussions. Mr. McNamara asked if the east end of the service alley would be opened onto Marion Street. Mr. Stein said the Village owned the right of way and would determine that. Mr. McNamara said there were two access points to the alleys and there was competition and congestion currently; closing an access point would bring traffic onto the streets. Mr. Stein said previously there was the Colt building there that used the alley. Mr. McNamara asked if there were multiple trucks waiting to access the alley where would they go. Mr. McBride said the traffic would be similar to as it was when the Colt building was in place. Mr. McNamara asked if the further studies referenced to during the presentation tonight would be done before breaking ground. Mr. Stein said the application contained studies that were appropriate for the project; any information requested by the plan commission tonight would be brought back for the next meeting if possible. Mr. McNamara asked if the intention was to break ground this year. Mr. Stein confirmed that the schedule agreed to by the village was to break ground this year. Mr. McNamara asked if the project was being rushed. Mr. Stein said the village has a process and they have been following the process in terms of public hearings and meetings. Mr. McNamara asked what type of trees would be planted. Mr. Ernie Wong, landscape architect, said in conjunction with the village forestry department, they were looking at a variety of trees like Oaks, Lindens, and Honey Locusts and in front of businesses varieties like Ginkgoes, but the final trees have not yet been chosen.

Chair Mann moved to public testimony.

Mr. McNamara said there were many elements to this project and he didn't think he was able to ask all the questions he had regarding the development. He said removing toxic soil to allow for subterranean use would only cost around \$3 million. He wondered if it was a good idea to leave toxic soil in the ground. He said it felt like Oak Park was giving this short shrift. He would like to know if he will be able to drive from his parking spots behind his business down the alleyways without traffic. He said prior plans were better than this plan. He said he wants a good development but this doesn't seem like good development and he'd like more time than four months before ground was broken.

Mr. Galen Gockel said the development bears substantial agreement with the village's 2004 plan and so has merit. He said he was slightly more opposed than neutral to the project. He said the theory that large developments increase the tax base and help homeowners was questionable. He said an increase on the residential component of a community was mostly responsible for an increase in the tax base. He said quality of life should be considered more so than developments of this nature as families moving to Oak Park and housing demand increased the tax base. He said there would be an inability of cars to move along the downtown area if the project goes ahead, and downtown will be less attractive for shoppers because they simply won't be able to get there. He recommended commissioners against being flexible in regards to height and density.

Chair Mann closed public testimony and said the public hearing would be continued to July 9, 2015

**Other Business**

None

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Eakin moved to adjourn. Commissioner Burton seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

Angela Schell,  
Recording Secretary