

MINUTES
REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
August 26, 2021

Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairperson Tim Loftus, who explained the Plan Commission's role as an advisory body to the Village Board, and asked those present to keep their masks on. He introduced meeting participants Village Board Trustee Liaison Steve Thompson, Planning Manager Kelly Purvis, Planner Atrian Fard, and Recording Secretary Barbara Dutton.

Roll was called. Present: Chairperson Loftus and Plan Commissioners Lloyd Berry, Laura Brown, Angela Fanella, Matt Halkyard, Peter Cooper and Mohammed Saeed. Absent: Commissioner Jamie Vondruska.

Public Comment Non-Agenda Items

There was no public comment pertaining to non-agenda items.

Approval of Plan Commission Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Saeed moved to approve the draft minutes of the August 12, 2021 Plan Commission meeting; seconded by Commissioner Halkyard, the motion passed by voice vote.

844, 850 and 856 Forest Avenue Pre-Application Meeting for a Proposed 16-Unit Row House Development

Staff Introduction

Village Planner Atrian Fard described the location envisioned for construction of 16 unit row houses, for which an amendment to the Zoning Map, a preliminary and final Planned Unit Development (PUD) designation, several variations, and exterior approval appearance are sought. The subject property includes three vacant lots and is located at the northwest corner of Forest Avenue and St. Charles Road, approximately 380 feet east of St. Charles Road's intersection with North Main Street, she explained. The 37,608SF site includes a corner lot with 76 feet of frontage along St. Charles Road, and which is considered the front of the site. The three lots are currently zoned R2, to which the Petitioner is requesting a change to R3, a designation, Ms. Fard said, deemed appropriate by Staff. To the west, the subject property is adjacent to the R2 Residential District as well as B-2 General Business District of unincorporated DuPage County. The adjacent property directly to the north and those to the east across Forest Avenue are located in the R-4 Single-Family Residential District of unincorporated DuPage County. The property directly to the south, across St. Charles Road is R2 Residential. While the proposed attached single-family development with four dwelling units per building is a permitted use, explained Ms. Fard, the petitioner will be required to seek Special Use for a PUD. She reported that the Petitioner is in the process of purchasing the property, on which he hopes to construct four freestanding three-story buildings, together comprising 16 row houses: 10 three-bedroom with two-car garages and six two-bedroom units with one-car garages and an off-street parking space. One handicap space is also specified for the development.

The proposal delineates 69 percent of the site to be maintained as open space. According to Ms. Fard, the Residential PUD calls for the area of land set aside for common open space not be of an isolated or an unusable size and/or character. Compliance with this standard will be confirmed as part of the formal process, she said.

A shared two-way driveway is proposed, and refuse is envisioned to be collected from each unit rather than a common dumpster, said Ms. Fard, who added that the driveway configuration could potentially cause difficulty for trucks, given the small amount of space for turnaround. As part of the formal project review, she said, a traffic assessment will determine if the design is appropriate. A site plan, illustrates the addition of trees and landscape screening, she said, but a formal review of the landscape plan will also be required. Planner Fard presented a list of deviations expected to be sought by the Petitioner:

- A lot width of 81 feet where 90 feet is required;
- A density of 16 units as opposed to the seven or eight permitted (or up to nine if certain amenities are offered);
- A floor-area ratio of 0.94, which exceeds the maximum allowed of 0.4;
- Relief in the form of numerous setback deviations;
- A proposed 10 feet of building spacing where 18 feet are required;
- Impervious surface that exceeds the code specification of 50 percent or less;
- Alteration of the size of off-the-street parking spaces;
- A drive-aisle width of 20 feet narrowing to 16, where 23 feet is required; and
- A driveway approach width of 20 feet, where 24 feet is required; and
- possibly an additional deviation with respect to the required 10-foot wide landscaped buffer strip along the west side and north, rear property lines.

Planner Fard displayed a concept image depicting a “transitional, more contemporary design” of architecture visualized for the project (though the design is yet to be determined). She related that the Village Engineer concluded that the amount of net new impervious surface in the proposed project is at or near the storm-water management threshold, so onsite retention would be required – a stipulation to be further evaluated.

Commissioner Questions

Commissioner Halkyard asked if the development would be on sewer or septic, to which Planner Fard replied, the former. Chairperson Loftus asked why R3 zoning is desired, and if R4 had been chosen whether there’d be a change in the variations requested. Planner Fard responded by pointing out that developments shown earlier in the meeting are zoned R2, and are close to commercial zoning, but R3 is less transitional from the R2 residential setting of the proposed. She added that the difference in requirements between R2 and R3 are minor. Chairperson Loftus asked if having one handicap parking spot met requirements; Planner Fard stated that, so far, no additional spaces are required, but research on this point isn’t complete. The Chairperson asked if the proposed visitor parking is adequate. Planner Fard said that because the proposed development is considered attached single-family, the combination of parking areas outlined should render it adequate.

Commissioner Fanella asked if the proposed distance between buildings is a fire safety issue. Ms. Fard indicated that she wasn't in a position to comment on this point. Chairperson Loftus asked if the Fire Department had looked at the plans. Planning Manager Purvis said that no Fire Department representative was at the Development Committee meeting, but a Fire Department review would be in order for a formal proposal. Commissioner Brown was asked if the Petitioner had explored purchasing the property to the west (which Chairperson Loftus observed was for sale) along St. Charles for a turnaround. Planner Fard deferred the question to the Petitioner. Commissioner Brown asked if the townhomes proposed would have basements. Ms. Fard said she'd not seen anything about basements. Commissioner Brown asked if parking would be free. Ms. Fard suggested asking the Petitioner this.

Petitioner's Presentation

Rick Scheck, owner of Scheck International and the contract purchaser of the subject property displayed images of recently constructed local townhouses, including the Courtyards and Newleaf. Mr. Scheck, who introduced himself as a 19-year Glen Ellyn resident with construction and real estate experience, showed a photo of the site for which he is proposing a similar complex, stressing the use of local talent in development. He pointed out the proximity to the Ackerman park district facility, saying that a "health and wellness component" – specifically a possible membership to the fitness center – is envisioned for the townhomes he proposes. Mr. Scheck reviewed properties near the site – which he stated has water, power and sewer – and said elevation in terrain precludes tapping aforementioned land to the west for a turnaround. He reported reaching out to nearby residents and businesses about his plans, and surmises there might be interest in selling property in the neighborhood. Mr. Scheck maintained that his development would have adequately wide entry for vehicles, as well as would offer an entry-level product in an area that has little inventory of new homes of modest square footage. He mentioned the prospect of proceeds from developments he accomplishes in town going to local charities.

The Petitioner's project architect, Craig Pryde with KTG Architecture + Planning, reviewed the architectural concept for the townhome development proposed, which he described as a "transitional product" designed to achieve affordability goals by diverging in density and unit size from other for-sale products in the market. He recognized that the Village is looking to redevelop the neighborhood in which the proposed development site lies, and explained that the zoning designation sought was more conducive to the vision for the product. Mr. Pryde said that the Petitioner would work to eliminate deviations in the development, which would face Forest Ave. He said parking would be consolidated for efficiency, no parking spaces will need variations/deviations, and guest parking (which could increase if spaces are unsold) is not required. With regard to Fire Department access, he said suspects the plan would be acceptable to the Village, but indicated a potential alternative could create an emergency access route. He pointed out as problematic from a setback standpoint an elevation change that is challenging to landscaping. He said a privacy fence is specified for the development, with garage entrances kept to the back. He said Building Code separation was chosen, yielding the 10-ft. separation, adding, "We're creating the architecture to fit the site." Mr. Pryde concluded that construction could be phased as sales occur, and that in the interest of affordability the design is be a "more straightforward" architecture.

Commissioner Brown asked the price point expected for a townhome planned, as well as if they might be designed to include an elevator. Mr. Scheck replied that he could see it being in the \$375K-\$450K range, and said that the Courthouse development has elevators, but living units start at \$750K. Mr. Pryde confirmed that elevators undermine affordability goals. Commissioner Saeed asked how storm water would be managed, wondering if a retention pond is envisioned. Saying that retention areas would detract from open space, Mr. Pryde indicated that an underground solution for wastewater would be preferable. The architect added that permeable pavers could be used for the drive space, but said these would be costly to install and maintain. Anticipating that the development would be home to 32 cars, Commissioner Saeed expressed concern about left turns onto St. Charles Road. Mr. Pryde said it's a bit presumptive to say the intersection of Forest and St. Charles and would be drastically different than it is now. Mr. Scheck said turning restrictions already exist.

Commissioner Halkyard asked Petitioner if there is flexibility to bring the project down to 15 units to help with the density issues, to which Mr. Pryde responded affirmatively. Chairperson Loftus asked if a requirement to have above-ground storm water retention would affect the number of units constructed. Mr. Pryde said above-ground would be more expensive, explaining that although a trade-off analysis can be performed, density helps offset costs. Commissioner Cooper observed that the area sees flooding and said he's concerned about how this will be exacerbated. Mr. Scheck speculated that some flooding could be attributed to clogged manholes on the site. Mr. Halkyard asked the price point for affordable housing in the Village. Planning Manager Purvis cited the rental level (based on household size), but said that it is different from "for-purchase" properties, and she'd have to look it up. Mr. Scheck anticipated that the proposed townhomes could have monthly mortgage payments of \$1,500-\$1,800. Mr. Pryde said rental projects have a more robust methodology for providing for discounts and affordability, whereas lower price points and other costs (e.g., interest and closing costs) are factors for purchase products.

Mr. Halkyard asked how the finished development would be managed. Mr. Pryde replied that it would be managed by either Mr. Scheck or a professional association. Chairperson Loftus asked if the Village would provide trash pick-up service, and expressed concern about the drive width. Mr. Pryde replied that, since the homes would not be apartments (considered commercial), he thought the Village would, and that negotiation with the waste hauler could address maneuverability. Commissioner Brown asked about plans for fencing. Mr. Scheck responded that a 6-ft. privacy fence is planned. Chairperson Loftus observed an existing block wall; Mr. Scheck indicated he'd have to look into the wall situation.

Public Comment

Allen Gaiden, 1N144 Forest Ave., said the planned development is too dense, and expects congestion with people getting in and out of units proposed. He stated that Forest Avenue is not in a condition adequate for the traffic he expects the development would generate. He recommends a scaled-down plan to avoid street parking, and is against the development as proposed.

Kathleen Gaiden, 1N144 Forest Ave., agreed with her husband, saying the project is too big for the space provided, and thinks parking would be problematic. She said that Milton Township maintains the neglected road on her block, and also that flooding issues have occurred in the neighborhood.

Gino Capezio, 606 St. Charles Rd., explained that he lives in a home on the “flagged-in” parcel. He said he agrees with the points his neighbors voiced, adding that his property would be affected the most. While he thinks the complex would be tastefully designed, he said it would affect property values in the neighborhood. He is concerned about noise level, and said he has reluctantly put his home up for sale because he is “terrified” at the prospect of the proposed development and potentially other such plans.

Vicki Linder, 600 E. St. Charles Rd., concurred with Mr. Capezio, and identified herself as the second most affected resident in the neighborhood. She said she is “scared to death” by the effect she believes the proposed development would have on property values. Having been in her home for more than 20 years, she said she thought she had a lot of equity built up, but now is not sure. Loss of green space is a concern, she continued, as is increased density. She said Forest can hardly handle existing traffic and that St. Charles Road is already dangerous. She cited existing water issues and suggested that parking on Forest is unrealistic. Fewer units might resolve a lot of the issues, she said, but stressed that the development proposed would change the neighborhood considerably.

Chairperson Loftus asked who maintains Forest Ave. Planning Manager Purvis stated that the portion in the Village is maintained by the Village, while the northerly segment is managed by the Township. (She added that the Village has agreements with the Township for snow plowing.) Commissioner Halkyard asked if Forest is on the list of capital improvements identified by the Village. Ms. Purvis said she can check. Mrs. Gaiden expressed concern about access relative to Emerson and Forest Avenues.

Mr. Scheck said he saw no evidence of diminished property values near other local townhouse projects, maintained that development of the subject property was inevitable, and sees the project as complimentary to the area. He suggested that residents’ construction equipment might have contributed to road deterioration, and noted that the nearby Montessori school had been required to have storm-water retention. Mr. Capezio disagreed with the opinion that the development wouldn’t hurt property values, and asserted that a flagged-in parcel would not be attractive to potential buyers.

Commissioner Discussion

Commissioner Fanella said she agrees with a lot of the Petitioner’s proposal in terms of housing in Glen Ellyn, is supportive of the overall concept and sees some variations as reasonable, but doesn’t endorse the spot zoning. She conveyed that she’d like to see such a development blend into the neighborhood and feature robust landscaping buffers to protect neighbors. Commissioner Halkyard said that, generally speaking, he is supportive of the overall development, but believes it would need to be incorporated into the neighborhood and that the proposed is too dense. Commissioner Cooper said he is generally in favor of trying to create affordable, entry-level housing, but is concerned about the water issues and is apprehensive about the potential for traffic accidents. He further expressed concerns about the potential of spot zoning to cause long-standing property owners to see the character of their neighborhood changed and about the narrowness of entryways presenting a fire-protection issue. While praising the effort to create affordable housing, Commissioner Saeed voiced concern about storm water. He stated that he would be in support of the project if storm water could be managed underground.

Commissioner Berry said the site seems to be one seeking a development, and while this proposed use is better than the previous submission, the design needs to promote cohesion in transition. He

recommends investigating fire and waste-hauling vehicle ingress and egress, given the 20-ft. driveway width he called “pretty narrow.” Commissioner Brown said she likes the plan but would be more comfortable with 12 units. She thinks townhomes will spur positive development in the area. Chairperson Loftus declared that 13 variations is not even close to Code and that the proposed is “way too dense.” He expressed concern about scale, and pointed out that the developments presented as comps exist in a different context, so transition make-up is different. He said he can’t support the plan presented, and that the Petitioner needs to scale back the density. Imagining serious parking issues, Chairperson Loftus wondered where cars would park if a resident hosts a party. He added that there might also be fire and storm water issues not yet discovered.

Trustee’s Report

Trustee Thompson reported that changes are being made to Village’s EMS service contract, notably fee changes and the addition of staff, and supervisory oversight. Medicare and Medicaid submittal procedures are also affected, he said. The prospect of a re-constituted Architectural Review Commission is in the offing, he continued, and said that a Central Business District grocery store report is to be heard. He said an upcoming workshop is to focus on a Police Department staffing study and a quarterly report on the financial health of the Village, which he said is experiencing a strong financial recovery. He added that the municipality has received a strong auditor rating and that the Village expects to receive funds under the American Rescue Plan Act. To a query from Chairperson Loftus about the progress to fill the remaining Plan Commission vacancy, Mr. Thompson said the appointment is still to be determined.

Chairman’s Report

Chairperson Loftus offered a reminder that Commission training is set for September 2nd.

Staff Report

Planning Manager Purvis announced that the Apex 400 PUD amendment consideration relative to building height will be back before the Plan Commission, as will an Avere apartment PUD amendment for expansion to create an amenity space. In response to queries about recusal of Commissioners wondering if they might have a conflict in deliberating about Avere, Trustee Thompson advised asking the Village Ethics Officer. Ms. Purvis reported that interviews are underway to select an Associate Planner. Chairperson Loftus complimented Planner Fard on the presentation she delivered this evening.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment

Chairperson Loftus adjourned the meeting at 9:22 p.m. following a voice vote on a motion to adjourn by Commissioner Fanella, seconded by Commissioner Halkyard.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Dutton-Thomas
Recording Secretary