

MINUTES
REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
May 26, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

After announcing that wearing of a mask is not required in the building, Chairman Tim Loftus called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., explaining the Plan Commission's function and operating procedure as an advisory body. He listed rules for the public comment portion of the meeting, and introduced Village Board Trustee Liaison Steve Thompson, Assistant Village Manager Emily Rodman, Planner Atrian Fard, Planning Intern Patrick Hoffmann and Recording Secretary Barbara Dutton-Thomas.

Roll was called. Present: Chairperson Loftus, Commissioners Brown, Fanella, Cooper, and Vondruska; Absent: Commissioners Arango, Halkyard, Saeed and Thakkar.

Public Comment Non-Agenda Items

None.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Vondruska moved to approve the draft minutes of the May 12, 2022 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Fanella, the motion passed by voice vote.

Pre-Application - 484 and 474 Forest Avenue/538-540 Crescent Boulevard – Glen Art Condominiums

Staff Introduction

Emily Rodman stated that the Petitioner, Fareed Haque of Haque Family LLC, the owners of the subject properties is requesting a pre-application meeting regarding the potential redevelopment for properties located at 484 Forest Avenue and the re-purposing of a portion of property 538-540 Crescent Boulevard and 474 Forest. A five-story, 16-unit condominium building with 3,992SF of commercial space fronting Forest Avenue is proposed, she said, adding that 31 parking stalls located under the adjoining buildings are proposed along with two surface-parking stalls. She reviewed the current state of the subject properties/uses: an 18-stall surface parking lot, a single-family home, Gearhead (auto repair) and the Glen Art Theatre. The Petitioner, she explained, would be seeking a Special Use Permit for a preliminary and final Planned Unit Development (PUD), requiring zoning deviations and exterior appearance approval. According to the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office (ISHPO), she related, all three buildings impacted by the developer are either on the National Register of Historic Places in the form of a historic district, or are eligible to be listed. Ms. Rodman offered context relative to long-range planning: The 2001 Comprehensive Plan sees the area as one that could benefit from building or site improvements; the 2009 Downtown Strategic Plan identifies specific properties as being ideal for a parking garage; and the draft 2022 Comprehensive Plan identifies the site as ripe for redevelopment (though not a "catalyst site") with appropriate uses such as a mixed-use development or a parking garage.

The project proposed, continued Ms. Rodman, would involve redeveloping the existing parking lot, and tearing down the single-family residential home to build a two-way ramp into Gearhead that would lead to underground parking underneath Gearhead and the Glen Art Theatre. Each of the subject properties is under the same ownership, she continued, saying that, for tax reasons, the Petitioner does not intend to consolidate the lots. The zoning is C5A, where front setbacks are not required, she said, and the Petitioner is proposing building to east, north and south property lines, with a 2-ft. rear setback along the west property line. The condo units, indicated Ms. Rodman, are to be a mix of one- and two-bedroom units. The proposed building height is 59 ft. tall. The Zoning Code includes rooftop mechanical equipment in calculating height, she said. When the mechanicals are added in, the proposed building would be 63 ft. 6 in. tall. In the C5A district, Ms. Rodman said, buildings are only allowed to be 45 ft. tall, so a deviation would be required for the proposed concept.

Construction of the proposed development would eliminate the 18 surface parking stalls currently in the lot that, according to the Petitioner, are used by residential tenants, who could use the new underground parking along with the condo tenants. The Zoning Code – which doesn't contemplate mixed-use buildings – does not require parking for commercial uses in the C5A District, explained Ms. Rodman, so the space to be added by the proposed building doesn't trigger the addition of any parking. As such, Staff has requested the Petitioner provide parking consistent with the requirements of the C5B District. (1 ½ parking stalls is required per one-bedroom unit and two parking stalls are required per two-bedroom unit). Additionally, related Ms. Rodman, staff has requested the petitioner replace the 18 surface parking stalls being removed, for a total of 48 stalls. At this point in time, said Assistant Manager Rodman, the Petitioner has not submitted a landscape plan for the proposed development, but as the building is proposed to be constructed essentially to property lines, there isn't sufficient space for landscaping. Staff is suggesting that the two surface parking stalls proposed be removed to provide some. Staff, she said, also has concerns about traffic implications of the two surface stalls (the removal of which would open up space for landscaping). The amount of space the building would take up on the site, she said, also interferes with refuse enclosure and ADA requirements.

To support the concept presented, Ms. Rodman listed the deviations that would be needed to allow:

- the lots to remain separate;
- a building height of 63' 6";
- parking for a residential building to be located on a different zoning lot than the principal building;
- some parking stalls in the garage to be 8.6 feet wide in lieu of 9 ft.;
- a two-way drive-aisle to be less than 25 ft. in width;
- a building with coverage exceeds 50 percent of the lot area; and
- a departure from standards that encourage amenities to make the development attractive to residents.

Commissioner Questions

Commissioner Vondruska asked if the plan is to leave the Glen Art structure in place and excavate underneath it. Ms. Rodman responded that the theater would remain operable, but the lower level, a former bowling alley, would be used for parking. Commissioner Fanella asked if there would be no change to the frontage of Crescent Blvd. Ms. Rodman said this is correct. Citing a letter regarding deficiencies from Village Building & Zoning Official Steve Witt, Chairperson Loftus asked about the elevator on the south side of parking exiting via the vestibule on the east side of the theater, the answer deferred to the project architect. The Chairperson wondered whether, if the lot consolidation doesn't happen and property is sold, could the proposed lot line to the south side having no setback prevent access to garbage from the condo building. He asked if the Village has considered making consolidation a requirement of the PUD. Ms. Rodman said the Village requires lot consolidation in a PUD to address future ownership issues, but in this case, if individual lots were sold and redeveloped, this would require approval. If lot consolidation isn't required at this point, she explained, there could be an issue unless easements are put in place. Ideally, she added, the lots would be consolidated. Chairperson Loftus asked for confirmation that there are no parking requirements for the residential portion of the proposed building. Ms. Rodman said this is correct, though the Village has required it for other mixed-use buildings in C5A. Mr. Loftus wondered if, without lot consolidation, a property owner might pull the parking rights of a condo association or vice versa. Ms. Rodman said that if protections aren't put in place, then the underground parking could potentially be sold to someone else. Mr. Loftus expressed concern about the Village subsidizing private parking. Staff shares this concern, replied Ms. Rodman, who noted that, based on the Zoning Code, the proposed would result in a net loss of parking downtown (though the Petitioner has conveyed otherwise). Calling the language in the last deviation listed "fairly squishy," Commissioner Cooper asked for examples of other PUDs in C5A where an accommodation was made over landscaping. Saying that landscaping is a challenge in the urban core, Ms. Rodman cited the Apex development, which features a pool deck with landscaping and other common area amenities. She mentioned, too, the outdoor amenity area planned for Avere. Acknowledging that this section of the Code is not specific, she said it's there to encourage attractive developments. She related that Planner Fard indicates that the intention is to integrate into the block and with the neighboring properties, and added that, while the Code is "touchy feely," the Village is looking for an overall cohesiveness. Chairperson Loftus asked if the passage on the north ("Public Access Way") is owned by the Village. Ms. Rodman said it belongs to the Petitioner, and is intended to be a transitional pathway. In response to a query y Mr. Loftus about relocation of utilities (e.g., transformers) behind the theater and Gearhead's, Ms. Rodman said the Village typically wants utilities to be undergrounded, but that is not always feasible, but this is something to be evaluated. Commissioner Fanella asked if the properties aren't consolidated, why the proposal is being brought forward as a PUD. Ms. Rodman responded that the size (i.e., square footage) dictates it in the downtown.

Petitioner's Presentation

Fareed Haque introduced himself as the son of the owners of the subject properties, saying they have held the properties since the mid-70s. With his mother passed on and his father retired, he said, he is trying to step in and keep things going. Expressing a desire to keep the area within the spirit of the

downtown, he said the block is “perking up” following some changes. The next step, he said, is to figure out what to do with the property. He said that, although the Glen theater basement is a huge space (empty since the 1950s), it’s not viable for applications explored, as adapting it would be cost-prohibitive. He said he has no objection to consolidating the PINs, and would have to work through this to see what the implications are, as the Glen is owned by one LLC and the other properties by another. He acknowledged, however, that it “makes sense” to have parking go with residences. He said the project would only need about nine residential spaces, as the other nine are rented to Gearheads. Project architect Mike Linn introduced Jackie Linn (and their colleague Laborio), and said they hope to contribute a nice building to the community, recognizing the location is an important part of it. He added that, “The numbers behind it have to make sense,” pointing to a limited footprint. Existing conditions images were displayed. Commissioner Brown asked the ceiling height of the basement. Mr. Linn said it is 16 ft. and that it is pitched due to the structure of the theater above. Chairperson Loftus asked if the lots were not consolidated whether there would be an issue with permitting. Mr. Haque reiterated that he has no objection to consolidating. Commissioner Cooper asked who is going to own the fee for the property with the garages. The Petitioner responded that they could perhaps get rid of one of the LLCs, and that a license in perpetuity could be the solution. Ms. Rodman said that permitting is not an issue because the Petitioner owns all of the buildings. Chairperson Loftus expressed concerns about agreements not following through when pieces of property are sold, causing the Village to absorb issues. The Petitioner said it would be desirable to have the parking associated with the property so residents wouldn’t lose parking. Mr. Linn reviewed the proposed building layout. Mr. Haque said it is hoped that tenants that provide appropriate services, such as a workout center or a café, could be solicited for the commercial space. Mr. Linn displayed an illustration comparing building heights; Mr. Haque maintained that the parking lot Forest Avenue slope affect the building’s appearance and height compared to others on the block. In response to a query by Commissioner Loftus asked about access to the roof, Mr. Linn a hatch would be considered to meet height restrictions. He said the exterior design is going after “a nice crisp look,” 95 percent brick materials accented by limestone at the front. Commissioner Cooper sought confirmation on the ratio of regular to disability parking spots. Ms. Rodman said she wasn’t sure what it is. Mr. Cooper asked if two parking spots are removed, where the disability spots needed would be put. Mr. Linn said he wants to double check the Code, but would try diligently to find another location for them (but indicated that a few spots in the plan that have large margins not tagged handicapped). Mr. Cooper asked about plans for a basement. Mr. Linn said there are none for a basement in the condo building, but each unit would have its own furnace, and the rooftop a small condenser. Commissioner Brown asked if there’d be bike storage. Mr. Linn replied affirmatively.

Public comment

Ms. Rodman read into the record the following questions from Zak Wilson: *I noted this evening a developer is seeking to obtain preliminary feedback on a mixed-use development concept located on the north side of the Village at Crescent and Forest Avenue. Notable historic buildings that would be impacted are the Glen Art Theatre and Gearhead Auto Repair. This mixed-use development will be five stories tall with 16 residential condos and 3,992SF of commercial space. 1. What impacts will this have on the Northside historic district? This area is a part of that district. 2. How does this represent the Comprehensive Plan? 3. Is this a catalyst site?*

Explaining that the theater is part of the Main Street North Historic District and the façades would remain untouched, Ms. Rodman said the ISHPO has concerns as to whether this is an area that would be detrimentally affected by the proposed development. She repeated earlier statements she made about the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Vondruska interjected that the Pre-app process is to elicit early feedback.

The following individuals commented:

Tom Smith, 543 Pennsylvania, said he's lived in Glen Ellyn since 1981 and owns the Baird & Warner property, for which he was going to add a third story 10 years ago, but didn't think it was right to do. He said a new structure he's contemplated would look nicer and work better than that the Petitioner proposes, and expressed an issue with the proposed height. With the proposed to be built right to the lot line, he said, the balconies would hang over his property. The parking theory, he continued, is "totally wrong," saying that the pipe for the storm system is huge, and said that with regard to the electrical aspects, the Petitioner has no idea what he is up against. "It's not a good project, guys."

Jim Murphy, 501 Forest, said he appreciates the owners wanting to keep the Village quaint, but that with the number of newly approved "big box" developments, the Village would be wise to see if occupancy can support another condominium/apartment. He said he believes Village taxpayers are suffering from "construction overload," and said that Glen Ellyn is not a high density urban area. He called for a small grocery to be considered for the downtown.

Marybeth Nelms, 932 Stacy Ct., expressed concern about underground parking below a theater, worrying about how emergency personnel will remedy a situation if a car fire occurs. She said the proposed development might be an extra added storm-water aggravation in the "super bowl" that is downtown, and called the plan for underground parking in old building "sketchy." She also listed a five-story building on a 60 ft. frontage, theater egress, a lack of a pick-up/drop-off area, and continuity of the block as concerns.

Sara Cassin, 501 Forest, commented that she is concerned that the concept of charming and quaint is leaving the Village with the proposed, which, she said, would probably fit in Oak Park, but not Glen Ellyn. She said she'd rather see an existing building improved than a new one built in this area. She surmised that the proposed could push Gearhead to work on more cars outside.

In response to a question of what a catalyst site is, Ms. Rodman said it is one on which redevelopment might spur reinvestment in surrounding properties and explained that six such are delineated in the Comprehensive Plan. Trustee Thompson offered as an example the hotel on Taft.

Bob Ruffie, 520 Crescent Blvd., said there seems to be plenty of parking for residents of the building, but wondered about visitors. Chairperson Loftus said the C5A parking requirement is different than residential, and Commissioner Vondruska said it's a valid question. Jim Murphy presumed the Village would lose parallel parking. Ms. Rodman said parking and traffic circulation would have to be evaluated.

Renee Atchison, a realtor, 66 Forest, applauded Mr. Haque for posting his concept, and said she is grateful the group is here talking. She asked the Commission if a need for condos is being expressed, as she said she thinks the town does. She added that she likes the limestone proposed.

Ms. Rodman said all of the units coming online are rentals, and the Village Board has expressed a desire to see more condos. Mr. Linn spoke up to clarify that the balconies don't exceed the property lines.

Commissioner Discussion

Responding to Ms. Atchison's point, Commissioner Vondruska remarked that condo developers wouldn't plan a project if it weren't viable. Calling the subject site "an odd piece of property," he said the proposed project needs to go through the various approvals, but it seems that digging under buildings to create parking space would be more expensive than "starting from scratch" by tearing down a building and putting in underground parking. While he expressed confidence that consolidation issues would be worked through, he said it is a concern. He said he's "not wild about" spreading the project out over pieces of property, calling the plan "complicated" and "a little disjointed," and observing today's retail environment, he doubted a corner grocery store will be seen. The Commissioner said he's "kind of on the border" about the building height, as the site sits low and is flanked by taller buildings, and that while the building "sitting there by itself is maybe not the prettiest thing," it's not on Main St.

Commissioner Cooper commended the Petitioner on his work and his openness to input. Referencing the Downtown Strategic Plan call for a vibrant downtown and the need to increase its residential population, he expressed support for turning an underutilized space into residential area, as well as is intrigued by the solution to the parking. He said, however, he thinks the Village is trying to solve parking problems of the late 20th and early 21st centuries and is skeptical about the role automobiles will play later this century, as he notes that younger purchasers are less tied to them, hence he's "not wed to the number of parking spots." He added that he doesn't like tall buildings on the subject block and the proposed "will really stand out." He said he likes the design, cautioning against an "ersatz/false" 1927.

Commissioner Fanella said she didn't have much to add, except that she would not support the project unless the lot consolidation went through. Commissioner Brown said she appreciates the Petitioner's reverence for the history of the Glen Art building. She said she's not sure the parking concept is the best idea, but values the creativity, and sees a tough decision in choosing between parking and retail. She said she believes people do want to downsize and stay in town, and that she likes architectural diversity, but wants to see the building blend in.

Chairman Loftus said he's curious how much the plans would change after reading the document from Steve Witt, specifically comments concerning a possible fire in the basement, and the requirements for sprinklers and accessibility. He said he's glad the Petitioner didn't mention building "luxury apartments," as he (Mr. Loftus) can't fathom spending that much money per month to live in one. He expressed favor for "some happy medium between 1927 and 2022" for an architectural style, and said he's "all for condos," as ownership breeds pride. He said he could support the Petitioner's effort – with tweaks – and indicated he's not concerned about losing parking and would hope for a reasonably sized building.

Trustee's Report

Trustee Thompson reported that the Board approved the yoga studio, underground utilities at Hillside and Main, and changes (with modifications expected) to the Zoning Code for electrical charging stations. He said a water main project will begin in June on south Park Blvd. The Board began its review of the Draft Comprehensive Plan, he continued, and said that the third listening session for the Roosevelt

Road-Taft Avenue Ad Hoc Work Group is scheduled for June 2nd. Due to elevator work to be performed at the Civic Center, he noted, public meetings in June will be held at the Police Station.

Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Loftus announced that Angela Fanella is retiring from the Plan Commission, and thanked her for her dedicated service. Jamie Vondruska is to retire shortly thereafter, he added.

Staff Report

Emily Rodman said that Commission terms were adjusted to accommodate the Board President assuming responsibilities in May, with new appointees' terms expiring July 31st. She said there will not be a Plan Commission meeting on June 9th, but anticipates one on June 23rd.

Adjournment

Chairman Loftus adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m., following passage by voice vote of a motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Fanella and seconded by Commissioner Cooper.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Dutton-Thomas
Recording Secretary