

MINUTES
SPECIAL PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
October 6, 2022

Roll Call and Call to Order

Roll was called, with Plan Commissioners Brown, Cooper, Dawson, Kreuzer, Saeed and Wyant present; and Plan Commissioners Arango and Thakkar and Chairperson Loftus absent. Commissioner Dawson moved to recognize Commissioner Cooper as Acting Chairperson in the absence of Chairperson Loftus. Seconded by Commissioner Saeed, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote with all Commissioners present voting, “Yes.” At the invitation of the Acting Chairperson, Plan Commissioner Brown moved to allow Chairperson Loftus to participate in the meeting remotely; seconded by Commissioner Dawson, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote with all Commissioners present voting, “Yes.” Mr. Loftus joined remotely via Zoom. Acting Chairman Cooper called the Special Meeting to order at 7:06 p.m., explaining its purpose within the Commission’s scope and the order of the evening’s Public Meeting. He outlined procedures for public input, including advising commenters not to merely echo predecessor comments. He introduced the following Village representatives present: Board President Mark Senak, Village Manager Mark Franz, Assistant Village Manager Emily Rodman, Attorney Greg Matthews, Community Development Director Martin Scott, Senior Planner Atrian Fard, Economic Development Coordinator Meredith Hannah, and Recording Secretary Barbara Dutton-Thomas.

Design Concepts for Roosevelt Road Taft Avenue Redevelopment Site

Before giving an overview of the five design concepts that had emerged from the charrette to consider as prospective directions for site redevelopment, Kon Savoy of Kon Savoy Consulting Group presented details of the commercially zoned 2.2-acre Roosevelt Road-Taft Avenue property, a “catalyst” site in a TIF district. He said the site has limited Roosevelt Road frontage, with the predominant area along Taft. He related that discussion yielded a majority view that Exmoor Avenue – under which a sewer line down the center has been identified – should remain open. Mr. Savoy said the site features a modest grade change, and is proximate to Panfish Park (which, he understands, could accommodate drainage from the site), offices, the Police Department and residential neighborhoods. He introduced associate Valerie Kretchmer to give a market economics recap. She said research showed that the site would likely garner interest in retail, such as a restaurant. She called the office market “more troubling,” citing a high vacancy rate along the East-West Tollway, and explaining that Glen Ellyn is not a regional office location. She said the residential rental market is “quite robust” in all different types of price points, and discerned a need for more affordable senior apartments. Mr. Savoy introduced the design concepts to be considered by describing them as “general development scenarios” generated by the charrette process and developed with Staff direction. He recommended that the options – which he indicated reflect “likely development” that *could* occur – be examined with a focus on configuration and use, and proceeded to describe each option conceived for review:

Option 1: This option looks at commercial-service uses along Taft, presenting opportunity for a drive-thru restaurant, and all parking responsive to current Village Code. A two-story building could house a yoga or music studio, a dentist office, or other businesses that don't need direct frontage on Roosevelt.

Option 2: This option delineates housing along Taft: duplex and "quadplex" dwelling units, as well as a three-story apartment building of 27 dwelling units.

Option 3: Similar to the previous one described, this option presents a four-story mixed-use building, with underground parking, ground-floor service/commercial use, and three residential stories.

Option 4: Called "responsive to a number of things that the community had vocalized," this option seeks to be a destination location overlooking Panfish Park, and features an upscale restaurant and a beer garden.

Option 5: Presenting a larger service/commercial building, this option was described as being "somewhat akin" to an existing office area. It outlines a mixed-use complex accommodating small retail.

Commissioner Questions

Chairperson Loftus asked what the Code would require for animal hospital parking if the building were built today. Assistant Village Manager Rodman said she could check, but guesses that the space to be sold combined with the hospital's current space exceeds the requirement. Commissioner Wyant asked whether the hospital is contemplating a building expansion, to which Ms. Rodman said the practice was initially looking for additional parking, but did mention a potential interest in expanding. Commissioner Kreuzer asked if space delineated in four of the options indicates what the hospital has expressed interest. Ms. Rodman replied affirmatively, pegging the space as slightly over a half an acre, and saying that no further discussion has occurred. Commissioner Dawson asked if, in lieu of apartments, whether the concept of condos has been explored. Ms. Kretchmer replied that the economics of building suburban apartments are better for developers, as condo profits hinge on unit sales. Mr. Dawson asked why a concept for open space was dismissed; Mr. Savoy said the idea didn't draw consensus, but acknowledged it could be on the table. Commissioner Saeed asked about impervious surfaces associated with the respective options. Mr. Savoy said the assumption is that it will be less than is currently, but even if it was more the amount would not be significant, and he is confident that it could be handled by Panfish Park. Ms. Rodman interjected that it is understood that the area is considered essentially all impervious for calculation purposes and that, according to DuPage County, no onsite detention would be required, though Best Management Practices (e.g., bio-swales) would be in order. She confirmed that some water could flow to the Park. Ms. Rodman noted that the animal hospital was built in 1998 and has 15 parking stalls. Since current Code specifies 26-33, the hospital is "under parked," she said, adding that if the half-acre parcel is acquired the hospital would have the capacity to be deemed "over parked."

Regarding Taft traffic, Acting Chairperson Cooper asked if there's one of the options that is more affected or less affected, and about the prospect for a traffic signal. Ms. Rodman said only Option 5 provides access on to Taft, and that the idea of putting a signal at Taft would need to be evaluated.

Commissioner Kreuzer asked if removing the north part of Exmoor had been considered, and whether a traffic signal at Exmoor is an option. Ms. Rodman said that portion needs to be maintained for access to existing businesses, not a lot of interest in closing Exmoor was expressed, and the decision to install a signal would have to be explored. Commissioner Dawson asked if Exmoor is a “no left turn” road onto Roosevelt. Ms. Rodman replied that it is “full access,” but this would be examined. Acting Chairperson Cooper asked if the first floor of the mixed-use commercial component depicted in Option 3 would be retail or services. Mr. Savoy said it would be determined by the market. In addition to wondering about Taft retail currently, Mr. Cooper asked if starting to offer retail on Taft would create issues. Community Development Director Scott responded that there is no direct access from this avenue, and that they would be accessed off Exmoor.

Saying he is cognizant of the lack of public use space south of Roosevelt Road, Acting Chairperson Cooper asked if consideration might be given for a library or park district annex. Ms. Rodman said the Village would have to look at the zoning implications and impacts. Acting Chairperson Cooper asked if Option 1 would accommodate pre-school or childcare space consideration. Ms. Rodman said this would be a special use in the C3 Zoning category, and impacts would have to be looked at by the Plan Commission. Chairperson Loftus asked if any interest had been expressed in a public use such as suggested by Acting Chairperson Cooper. Ms. Rodman said she is not aware of any interest from the Library or Park District. Mr. Loftus asked where the stormwater sewer pipe that runs down Exmoor would be placed if it was to be relocated. Ms. Rodman said this would have to be explored with the Village Engineer, and the pipe would have to be relocated to Village property unless an easement is purchased. She said it seems unlikely that moving the storm sewer 200 ft. east would bring a lot of value. With redevelopment, she said, the Village anticipates that, if Exmoor remains, it would be redone to meet current standards.

Public comment

It was noted that a copy of a written submission from Cheron Corbett on behalf of the DuPage Housing Authority would be attached to the meeting minutes.

Kenneth Kloss, 350 Ridgewood, Glen Ellyn, presented a concept drawing of an alternative plan for the subject site, on which he envisioned a banquet hall, a “super-duper” restaurant with a view of the Chicago skyline, and a venue for enjoying music and dancing at night.

Brian Milnamow, 729 Brentwood Ct., Glen Ellyn, said survey outcome was clear: Option 4, calling for full commercial use with a beer garden, is preferred. He reasoned that this choice would not impact crowded schools but would optimize tax revenues, alleviating the burden on residents. He stated that south Glen Ellyn doesn’t lack affordable housing, and voiced a desire for “a place to congregate.”

David Firchau, 108 S. Ellyn, Glen Ellyn, said he would like to see open space, perhaps hosting tennis courts or a skating rink. He lamented the demolition of Wagner School, and advocated for “anything but a [residential] development,” saying he believes a medical group would be attracted by the space. He, too, maintained that a gathering place is needed, and observed that older residents struggle financially.

Patrick Van Tiem, 86 S. Parkside, Glen Ellyn, said that while nothing is wrong with a public use, the taxes on the Village's south side are high and the municipality needs commercial tax revenue. He said the subject site is not the space for non-revenue-generating affordable/supportive housing, which he suggested is being pushed for the south side. He voiced preference for Option 4, with tie-in to the park.

Clara Hughes, 310 Hawthorn Blvd., Glen Ellyn, on behalf of DuPage United pitched "Full Circle Communities," which she described as a not-for-profit developer of below-market -rate, accessible, supportive housing. Lobbying for such housing on the site, she suggested the outfit would be a good partner to the Village, pointing to what she called its "excellent track record" in obtaining Federal funds.

Norris Eber, 701 Kingsbrook, Glen Ellyn, introduced himself as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee, the Kingsbrook Homeowners Association and the Roosevelt Road TIF Review Board. A semi-retired commercial developer, he emphasized the need for animal hospital parking, called for no additional curb cuts on Taft, and contended that Glen Ellyn residents would get no preference in access to supportive housing described. He pronounced the subject site commercial by history, by zoning and by Master Plan.

Kevin McCrane, 701 Amber Ridge, Glen Ellyn, said it is clear what Glen Ellyn is proud of, and maintained that the south portion of town has been slighted. He said he hoped the Village would listen to the majority in the area, who, he said, support commercial-only development for the site. He cited taxes and overcrowded schools as community concerns, and said that with the Links and the College taking up taxable area, residents are "feeling the pain." He argued that, while the Village should not overlook housing needs of mentally challenged citizens, the occupants of the subject site shouldn't be subsidized.

Renie Atchison, 66 Forest Ave., said the established veterinary clinic should be allowed additional parking. Offering a realtor perspective, she related that residential rental demand is high, and said she personally advocates for more group homes – such as the type that the aforementioned Full Circle organization develops and staffs – in the community's neighborhoods.

Commissioner Discussion

Option 1: Remarking that parking is frequently a "bugaboo," Acting Commissioner Cooper noted this option doesn't require a parking variance. Chairperson Loftus asked who owns the service drive behind Wingstop and Dunkin' Donuts. Ms. Rodman said it's a public right-of-way that could be evaluated, but said the Village likes properties to have two points of ingress and egress. (Mr. Loftus cited as precedent locations on the eastern part of the site that have only one way in or out.) Labeling the egress into Starbuck's a "disaster" and saying he'd be reluctant to create another situation that creates a similar hazard, Mr. Cooper said he sees any small drive-thrus in this area to be "problematic." Ms. Rodman said that because a drive-thru requires Special Use approval, there is opportunity to evaluate configuration. Commissioner Kreuzer asked if there's anything that would prohibit another access point for the proposed drive-thru onto Exmoor, to which Ms. Rodman replied that such would be subject to Village approval. Mr. Kreuzer suggested that the building footprint could perhaps be changed to avoid a drive-thru exit on to Exmoor.

While conceding a need for animal hospital parking, Acting Chairperson Cooper expressed reluctance to give up a “substantial portion” of the parcel for that purpose, and asked about lease vs. own standards. Explaining that ownership carries the liability and tax obligations, Ms. Rodman noted that a shared parking arrangement might be an option. Observing that Panfish Park has street parking, Commissioner Brown asked if there are plans for a parking lot for anticipated higher park use. Ms. Rodman replied that lot parking is available, but that using a portion of the Taft site could be explored. Calling the scenarios presented “uninspiring,” Commissioner Wyant advocated for a “hip” mixed-use scheme. Chairperson Loftus asked if street parking might be made available on the north side of Taft, to which Ms. Rodman said this could be evaluated once an actual proposal is brought forward. Mr. Cooper asked if there was any concern among Commission members about lack of direct access from Taft. Chairperson Loftus said he would have no problem having access to Taft west of Exmore, so to leave room for fire trucks. Mr. Cooper said he is comfortable not creating new access to Taft. Mr. Kreuzer voiced a similar view. Mr. Cooper observed that building placement is closer to the street than Code requires, to which Mr. Wyant urged reserving judgment in the interest of flexibility. Commissioner Brown, who favored sidewalks, as well as curb cuts to accommodate fire trucks, said the setbacks shown are fine, while Chairperson Loftus said he’d prefer them reduced, and that keeping ingress and egress farther from Taft would benefit fire department maneuverability. Mr. Kreuzer urged making sure traffic from Exmoor to Taft can see clearly.

Option 2: Acting Chairperson Cooper asked the Village’s history in converting commercial uses to residential. Some examples (e.g., The Legacy) were listed, with Ms. Rodman noting that the Apex and the McChesney properties are still considered commercial from a zoning perspective. Mr. Cooper asked if Commission members would be comfortable permitting the property to be used for residential. (Ms. Rodman said the property would have to be rezoned for this use.) Commissioner Wyant said the group has to be open-minded. In upholding of the Commission’s responsibility to make sure it is thinking of all residents and keeping taxes as affordable as possible, Commissioner Brown said she would not be keen on changing the zoning east of Exmoor. Commissioner Kreuzer said the decision should be what is best for the entire Village. Commissioner Dawson said he is open to the idea, while Commissioner Saeed said he could endorse housing, provided dwellings were shifted away from Taft. Chairperson Loftus said he’d rather see the east side of Exmoor commercial, as he has “big concerns” about housing here, seeing dangerous traffic patterns on Taft. He said he could accept low-density housing west of Exmoor. Mr. Cooper said he is open to considering multi-family housing, though has concerns about safety.

Option 3: Acting Chairperson Cooper expressed reluctance toward increasing retail traffic along a delineated portion of Taft. Ms. Rodman said it’s unlikely here, due to lack of visibility from Roosevelt and inadequate traffic along Taft. Chairman Loftus said he doesn’t want to see any market-rate apartments, as the Village already has enough and Village doesn’t have a good track record on rentals. Commissioner Kreuzer asked if row house condos have market viability. Ms. Kretchmer responded that there would be a market for these and, while they might not fetch the prices other locations command, they would offer a plus in their proximity to the park and to shopping.

Option 4: Chairman Loftus said, despite concerns about ingress and egress, he likes this concept (and beer garden), though wondered if parking would be adequate for this potential “go-to” spot. He spoke positively of the easterly retail block, and said he’d be open to low-density affordable housing west of Exmoor if commercial/retail isn’t feasible. Skeptical of dictating commercial use (to which Chairman Loftus floated the idea of marketing the parcel as one package), Acting Chairperson Cooper said he could be open to a beer garden, though sees alcohol-focused establishments in heavily trafficked areas as a concern. Commissioner Dawson expressed concern about commercial space in this context, noting that retail spaces are changing. Mr. Kreuzer, who indicated he’s upbeat about beer gardens, said he’s not averse to retail, but pointed to area vacancies. Ms. Rodman said circumstances – some intentional – surround these. Ms. Brown observed that people want the site “activated” and want to be outside.

Option 5: Acting Chairperson Cooper noted this option is the only one with curb-cut access to Taft. Discussion of various scenarios relative to animal hospital parking ensued.

Acting Chairperson Cooper invited general thoughts about the process /property. Commissioner Saeed voiced favor for mixed-use. Commissioner Brown advocated consideration of the animal hospital, and open communication concerning Taft-Roosevelt redevelopment and Panfish Park renovation projects, the former of which she sees as fitting for a “District”-type gathering space. She suggested the Duane and Lorraine catalyst site as a potential location for a group home for people with disabilities. Chairperson Loftus said he “definitely” wants retail/commercial/food service on the east side of Exmoor, but is skeptical of housing in this area, citing busy traffic. He expressed hope that the Village would help the animal hospital, and declared, “The south side needs a gathering spot,” seeing the park as ripe for such. Also promoting subject site-park synergy, Commissioner Wyant said there’s “a long way to go with these plans,” reiterating that none are compelling or “transformative.” Declaring that the market will make the decision on development, Commissioner Kreuzer held that, since office use is a non-starter, retail and housing are the only viable uses, adding that the animal hospital deserves opportunity. Commissioner Dawson averred for a mixed-use with residential and gathering space, with a percentage of the former set aside for disabled people, and expressed confidence in the Village’s ability to alter Roosevelt and foster affordable housing. Concluding that the Commission is hesitant to say much “until the market speaks,” Mr. Cooper urged not waiting for the perfect plan, but moving ahead with dispatch.

Staff Report

Senior Planner Fard announced that the Oct. 13th Plan Commission Meeting is cancelled.

Adjournment

Acting Chairperson Cooper adjourned the meeting at 10:36 p.m., following passage by voice vote of a motion by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Wyant.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Dutton-Thomas
Recording Secretary