

CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

Approved with changes January 10, 2022

MINUTES

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

December 13, 2021 7:00 P.M.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Establishment of a Quorum.

Alderman Stout called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll call found Aldermen James Beifuss, Melissa Birch-Ferguson, Christine Dettmann, Jayme Sheahan and Rebecca Stout present.

Also in attendance was Community Development Director, Tom Dabareiner.

2. Approval of Minutes.

A. October 11, 2021.

Alderman Beifuss moved and Alderman Dettman seconded a motion to approve the minutes. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Birch Ferguson, Dettman, Sheahan and Stout.

3. Public Participation. None.

4. Items for Consent.

A. 327-329 Wilson Street Minor Subdivision - The petitioner requests approval of a Minor Subdivision to perform a two-lot split on a 19,600 square foot commercial space.

Alderman Beifuss moved, and Birch Ferguson seconded the motion to approve Items for Consent 4. A. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Birch Ferguson, Dettmann, Sheahan and Stout.

5. Items for Discussion.

A. Gravel Driveway Zoning Code Amendment - In October, Development

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Committee discussed gravel driveways and provided Staff direction to amend the existing Ordinance with one that declares gravel driveways and parking areas as legal non-conforming. A draft Ordinance is provided for consideration and recommendation.

Mr. Dabareiner updated the members. Staff was given direction to write a new ordinance to make gravel driveways legal non-conforming. The Plan Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals (PC/ZBA) wanted to add language so that change of property ownership would require a surface upgrade. However, staff believes this is not feasible because staff did not uphold the ordinance for many years while properties changed hands and were not required to make surface upgrades. Legal concurs that this cannot be added. The new ordinance makes gravel driveways legal non-conforming structures that cannot be expanded and only maintained.

Alderman Stout stated this is the direction staff was given at their last meeting, and that adding that requirement would not be legal. Alderman Dettman agreed this is the best course of action considering the history.

Alderman Dettman moved, and Alderman Beifuss seconded the motion to approve Item 5. A. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Birch Ferguson, Dettmann, Sheahan and Stout.

B. Draft Comprehensive Plan Discussion - For about one year Staff has worked with Muse Community Design, the community and the Plan Commission to draft an updated Comprehensive Plan for the City. The Plan Commission hosted the Public Hearing on the draft Plan on December 7, 2021, which was unanimously supported. A representative from Muse will present an overview of the process and the draft Plan for discussion.

Tom Dabareiner stated that representatives from Muse were in attendance to present, and he distributed a draft copy to the members. He introduced Courtney Kashima, the owner and Founding Principal of Muse Community Design. Ms. Kashima addressed the Committee. She gave a brief background on her firm and the process for embarking on the draft Plan. She mentioned that the Plan was discussed at the public hearing last week and many audience members contributed to the discussion. Ms. Kashima began with Process Highlights, emphasizing that once they came to know West Chicago, they observed a tremendous collaborative spirit, which they wanted to incorporate and build upon in the Plan. Their process was bilingual and multicultural and it includes customized strategies/recommendations. They engaged the public through both in-person and virtual means, and they found a way to engage youth as well. They also created an Action Kit. She reviewed the Plan timeline from inception to draft and touched on a few highlights. They created a project website in both English and Spanish and used the City's social media to reach out. She touched on the themes they read about in past Plans and the themes they heard about through community engagement. She shared pictures from and described the in-person, virtual and youth engagement sessions held in English and in Spanish. Overall, they had over 1,000 touch points including one-on-one interviews, a broad survey via online and by

mail, visioning sessions, workshops and open houses at two small, local businesses. That entire process turned into the draft Plan. They wanted to create a modern Comprehensive Plan that builds upon a more traditional Plan and yet makes it more clear and accessible. They established a vision statement first and then organized the Plan by three topic areas: People, Places and Economy. Then goals, policies and implementation strategies were added. She turned over the presentation to her colleague, Kathryn Faydash.

Ms. Faydash reviewed the Plan goals of overarching goals and focused goals for each of the three topic areas. She touched on several specific goals for each. She then discussed the Plan's Big Ideas, which are ideas that were connected from both what they learned from past Plans and from their community engagement efforts. They know residents are excited about the Plan and so they wanted to create something splashy and inspirational to depict what West Chicago could look like. She shared some examples of the artistic renderings to illustrate the ideas of a revitalized downtown, being more connected across the community and small business incubation and support. Next came the Plan recommendations, where Ms. Faydash discussed the sources used such as past Plans, community and stakeholder engagement, looking at best practices from similar-sized communities and analysis of City data. She also provided examples for each of the three topic areas.

Ms. Kashima concluded the presentation by discussing implementation of the Plan. She shared a matrix and described its different elements. She mentioned the Action Kit, and indicated how they see it being made available and used. She invited the members to ask questions.

Alderman Beifuss stated the Plan represents good work, ideas and engagement. It is also in an easy-to-follow format. He asked about short-term *commercial* leases, and how the City would promote them. Ms. Kashima responded that this is not something the City would require nor legislate, but rather support through permitting and zoning. Alderman Beifuss asked if they considered any sites for a business incubator. Ms. Kashima clarified they focused more on business incubation in general and not on establishing one sole incubator site. A small discussion ensued about university-community partnerships.

Alderman Beifuss asked about the Future Land Use Map and the areas where they have added multi-family residential to areas that are currently zoned for single family. One such area is what they refer to as "Old Heidelberg." Ms. Kashima stated they were trying to simplify some of the zoning categories. Almost half of the zoning districts are single family. She asked if West Chicago needs seven different residential districts? They looked at where things should stay the same and where there are opportunities for change. To support the downtown, they looked for opportunities for density nearby. This is one of those areas. Alderman Beifuss stated he is not comfortable with that area being multi-family. He inquired about another area on Colford Street, and asked if that area is considered part of downtown. Ms.

Kashima stated they are not prescribing wholesale change of that area. Rather, if the members buy into the benefit of fewer zoning categories, there has to be some wiggle room within those categories. There is nothing prohibiting new single family or existing to remain in an area such as this they have identified as multifamily. Tom Dabareiner reinforced the notion that land use and zoning are different things. He gave the example that the land use may suggest an opportunity to enhance the mix of uses or improve the linkages between areas. Zoning ordinances would follow in prescribing how to do it. Alderman Beifuss said he understands the distinction. They use the Comprehensive Plan, *however*, as a tool for planning and for discussions with developers as to what is appropriate or not.

Alderman Beifuss then asked about the notion of moving away from bulk requirements. Ms. Kashima replied that this was suggested under Implementation Strategies to consider residential zoning by form rather than use and density and to allow for greater density in the B-1 District. Their intention was to help guide land-use decision making in the future. The Plan represents where they believe change might occur. To make a thriving downtown, it means keeping the population up and making it easy to get to if you live nearby and want to walk, bike or drive. Some opportunities for density near downtown might mean adding a two-flat or adding an accessory dwelling unit.

Alderman Beifuss expressed concern about changing the neighborhood that he lives in, as he knows the streets and the people who live there. Alderman Dettman asked if these changes would improve the quality of their living experience in town. A resident expressed to her wanting accessibility to the downtown for folks who live on the other side of Rte. 59. Ms. Kashima stated that it is not just the distance but also the quality of the walk. She asked the Aldermen what they would want to have happen if someone purchases two lots. Their data supports the need for more housing, but given the constrained geography, she asked them where else could appropriately scaled housing go. If the Plan suggestions are not right, they should change them.

Alderman Beifuss stated that it seems odd to go include both sides of Colford Street the way they have. He walks this neighborhood and feels invested in this street, and the idea of buildings being torn down for redevelopment bothers him. He does not see it as part of the downtown per se. Tom Dabareiner agreed that crossing the street is a mistake. Ms. Kashima stated that a motion tonight could be made subject to map editing.

Alderman Beifuss indicated he accepts the idea of having more types of housing. He likes the idea of trail connectivity, especially across Rte. 59 for pedestrians. He has seen underpasses in other towns. He is not sure the best place for one to go, but he would like to have this.

Alderman Birch Ferguson asked Alderman Beifuss if he still had concerns about “Old Heidelberg” being multifamily. He said he did. She stated she does as well. She grew

up there and it is an established single-family neighborhood. Alderman Stout asked if this area includes the old General Mills site, which could be torn down and become more dense residential. Discussion ensued among the members, staff and Ms. Kashima about defining multifamily, the best areas for it, and the redevelopment of the old train depot. Alderman Birch-Ferguson stated she would accept housing no greater than four-flats for the “Old Heidelberg” neighborhood, but not apartment complexes. Tom Dabareiner indicated they should mark the area as single family and based on tonight’s discussion, staff would know what they find to be tolerable multifamily or not. He offered to collect any changes the members are considering tonight so Muse can make the changes and provide a revised draft Plan to the Committee in January.

Alderman Stout surmised for the Committee that with these revisions in mind, and with the members seeing the draft Plan back again, they are granting a conditional approval.

Alderman Birch Ferguson moved, and Alderman Sheahan seconded the motion to approve Item 5. B. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Birch Ferguson, Dettmann, Sheahan and Stout.

6. Unfinished Business.

Alderman Beifuss asked about the status of the downtown TIF. Mr. Dabareiner stated the draft Plan has been written, but it has to be made available to the public. Alderman Beifuss asked about the timeframe. Mr. Dabareiner responded they are looking at March for adoption. Alderman Beifuss asked about the funds that remain in the TIF and the façade grants. Mr. Dabareiner stated that a lot of what was in the current TIF got shifted to the general fund. Once they have sufficient funds in the new TIF, the funds can be shifted back.

7. New Business.

Alderman Dettman expressed concern on behalf of some residents who have indicated concerns about the new apartment building downtown. They dislike the number of units, the scope of it and the potential traffic concerns. Some of the concern is also that apartment complexes start out as a grand idea, but 20 years later, they are vacant, rents drop and become more of an eyesore. There may even be criminal activity. She asked why not townhouses instead. Mr. Dabareiner replied that without the greater density that a large apartment complex would bring in the downtown, the City would never be able to revive the downtown. They went through a lengthy planning process to get to this point, which was well publicized, and there is nothing new. They are still working through the details with one developer. Alderman Dettman stated she likes the idea of apartments across from the train, but her concern is the height and the amount of units. Mr. Dabareiner replied that a certain number of units are needed to make it work financially. The Zoning Ordinance does allow for four stories, and they would open themselves up

for legal issues if they were to lower that. High quality construction and investment requires a minimum number of units to make the development financially feasible. Alderman Dettman stated she does not like the idea of a non-bedroom or efficiency unit. Alderman Beifuss stated he has received similar feedback. The problem is that a newsletter went out stating they are doing this, but they are still only discussing it. The perception is that it is happening. Mr. Dabareiner agreed with Alderman Beifuss. Alderman Stout added it is important to offer housing for people at different stages in their lives, such as empty nesters. This is a plan in progress and nothing is set in stone. Alderman Dettman stated she likes the overall plan to revitalize the downtown and get people out walking around. Some discussion followed among the members regarding some of the positive changes they are seeing already with people attending City-sponsored events and getting out and about.

8. Reports from Staff. None.

9. Adjournment.

Alderman Beifuss moved, and Alderman Sheahan seconded the motion to adjourn the Development Committee meeting at 8:45 p.m. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Dettman, Sheahan and Stout.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Burke