

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TASK FORCE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2011 – 7:00 P.M., DENS A & B**

Members Present: Chairman Mark Armstrong, Ald. Bessner, Dr. Steven Smunt,
Steve Gaugel, Betsy Penny, John Rabchuk

Members Absent: Brian Doyle

Also Present: Devin Lavigne and Dan Gardner, Houseal Lavigne Associates
Rita Tungare, Russell Colby, Matthew O'Rourke

Call to Order

The St. Charles Comprehensive Plan Task Force meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Armstrong.

2. Approval of Minutes for June 29, 2011

Betsy Penny made a correction to the minutes stating she was not on the Planning Commission but was on the Housing Commission.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed by voice vote to accept the minutes of the June 29, 2011 meeting.

3. Presentation and Review of Market Overview and Analysis

Mr. Gardner explained that the Market Analysis helps inform the planning process so that as we go through the process, the decisions are being based at some sense of market reality and economic reality of what could potentially be feasible. This market analysis looks at where we have been in the last 10 years in terms of population growth, household growth, incomes and where we are now and are we continuing to grow.

Mr. Gardner started with an overview stating that we have a community and an area that is stable and growing, that is proactive with development going on, and this Comprehensive Planning process is delivering a positive message both regionally and locally. From a commercial development and demand standpoint, we looked at how downtown functions in terms of its role in the community, as well as its function from a retail standpoint relative to the local residential market. Randall Road and the area around Charlestowne Mall were also looked at in terms of potential. Mr. Gardner stated there are different potentials based on the market that those areas serve, as well as juxtaposition to other competitive properties and locations. Mr. Gardner stated there is relative saturation within the market area for downtown, that's not to say that there are too many businesses or that something has to give, it just means it's functioning well and there is not a lot of room for growth.

Chairman Armstrong asked in terms of “not a lot of room for growth” you mean business growth relative to the current population or residential growth?

Mr. Gardner answered that from this standpoint there is not a lot of room to add 30,000 sf. of new retail to the downtown, there is not that kind of unmet demand for uses in the downtown.

Chairman Armstrong asked if a change in the amount of residences in downtown would possibly lead to a change in the demand?

Mr. Gardner stated that could work two ways. One being it would create a more active environment and two it would add to the residential base within the 5 minute drive time and create consumer expenditure weakness.

Chairman Armstrong asked that drawing from your analysis, if we were to do planning in the downtown area and only added retail it would not have as much of a chance for success as adding a mixed use?

Mr. Gardner answered yes.

Chairman Armstrong agreed that if we are going to go anywhere with development in the downtown its mixed use and to build off of what’s already occurring along the river.

Mr. Gardner stated that St. Charles has some great location sites and sites with potential that have otherwise fallen in obsolescence and vacancies through no fault of the City, and those are the areas to focus on rather than new.

Mr. Gardner stating that it’s a stable population, an aging population, but we also see a growth in the 25-34 year old age group.

Chairman Armstrong asked if demographically there are sub-categories within 25-35 years old. Specifically I am wondering if the data reflects college students living with their parents rather than moving on and the lack of mobility in the market in the last several years means that everything just grows older and that’s why everything seems 10 years older than it was.

Mr. Gardner stated yes you get a little bit of that but also looking at projections and where they were at before 2010 data came out there is still growth projection in those age categories because there is an attractiveness to some of the new development and the location to some of the young professionals that will target this area. The upside to communities like St. Charles is that there is an increase in the older population that is financially stable. There has also been an increase in low income category due to the economy, and accommodating all the different age, income cohorts that you have is important and a big part of the planning process from land use to transportation.

Aldr. Bessner asked if the demographic group of ages 35-44 is there any characteristics of being more transient.

Mr. Gardner replied no to the contrary they are more rooted and family rearing years.

Member Rabchuk questioned in regard to a reference made to the increase in the percentage of families that will be using rental homes as opposed to purchasing single family homes, and that's a national trend as well, will this be changing?

Mr. Gardner stated that this will not change in the short term or the midterm, it's something that is on the rise, there are a few parts to that, one being the income levels dropping, second is the uncertainty of owning a home and lack of faith that is going on, third is the changes in the capital markets in the mortgage industry.

Member Rabchuk made mention of the transient factor playing a big role right now as well.

Mr. Lavigne made a comment that a community with a quality school district is more susceptible to a single family home renter and those families tend to be more stable because they want to stay in their school district.

Member Rabchuk questioned if there is any census data that reflects the amount of rental properties as opposed to single family.

Mr. Gardner stated yes it's in the housing 10- year section

Chairman Armstrong asked about the single-family home sales statistics that are listed by zip codes, do the categories represent the zip codes or more the municipality.

Mr. Gardner said that the database used was zipcode based.

Aldr. Bessner questioned whether Mr. Gardner felt that downtown Geneva had any growth left as far as retail and commercial space based on the population and also having a train station.

Mr. Gardner stated that their firm is at this time helping Geneva with their downtown master plan, and there is very limited opportunity for development, it's not tapped out but there are issues as far as edge, and how much expansion to the downtown is acceptable to the residents. Geneva right now is a mature community that will be dealing with some issues on expansion and re-development and even opportunities that do exist have to occur adjacent to and compatible with some historic structures.

Mr. Lavigne and Mr. Gardner did a brief scan over questions submitted by Member Doyle. Due to Mr. Gardner seeing the questions for the first time, he was not fully prepared to answer questions accurately. Mr. Gardner stated he would put responses to Member Doyle's questions within the next couple of weeks.

4. Presentation and Review of Existing Physical Conditions

Mr. Lavigne distributed and reviewed the Existing Land Use Map.

Chairman Armstrong commended Mr. Gardner and Mr. Lavigne for coming so close by just doing a windshield survey, but that there are parcels that are classified incorrectly. Chairman Armstrong made a suggestion to the Task Force to note any discrepancies spotted on these maps in an email and send to Russell Colby.

Mr. Lavigne spoke about the difference between vacant vs. agricultural use. Basically if there is active farming and it looks like it's unplatted and has a potential for annexation and development, it will go under undeveloped. If it's platted and it's a vacant lot or undeveloped parcel, we flag those as vacant lots.

Ms. Tungare mentioned that Oliver Hoffman is flagged as agriculture, but it's actually developable land and should show as vacant.

Member Rabchuk mentioned that west of Route 31 and south of downtown, a lot of the houses have apartments upstairs because zoning permits it.

Chairman Armstrong suggested going to utility billing and getting suite addresses and being able to tell that way.

Mr. O'Rourke stated that the township keeps record of 2 and 3 family dwellings and that with PIN numbers and working with GIS department, the information could be obtained.

Task Force Members had a discussion on the uncertainty of how certain parcels should be flagged.

Resident Kim Malay suggested a dual category for certain parcels.

The Task Force then had a discussion on lumping agriculture and vacant lots together stating because its existing land use, we do not have to say this is developable or has to be a farm, its open.

Ms. Malay said that because the zoning is in place, she feels that's where the key is that it's been approved for development.

Chairman Armstrong felt that since the map is existing land use he would not differentiate between vacant and agriculture undeveloped. Just call it vacant.

Ms. Tungare suggested Mr. Lavigne provide a defined description of the different categories and land uses.

Ms. Tungare asked the Task Force members to review the map and get comments back to Mr. Colby.

Mr. Lavigne distributed and reviewed the Local Government Facilities Map. Mr. Lavigne said to think once the plan gets assembled it will be an atlas of all the community resources and it's important that we get them all listed and as we talk about recommendations, if we say the city needs to do a better job screening the neighbors around a certain facility that there is a point of reference in this plan of exactly where that facility is located.

Chairman Armstrong asked if the numbering came from what we think will be the most relevant and asked if that will change based on the recommendation of the plan.

Mr. Lavigne stated they could add to them and even combine and that the state requirement of the plan is to identify the community facilities.

Mr. Lavigne distributed and reviewed the Quasi-Public Facilities Maps.

Chairman Armstrong said that churches to a certain extent become de facto community facilities.

Member Rabchuk noted some discrepancies on the map of churches not list and also churches that are in commercial space.

Mr. Lavigne stated that for the land use plan the distinction is whether we want there to be a church there, but for now it's important to have them all flagged.

Mr. Lavigne distributed and reviewed the Community Schools Map.

Task force noted that Mades Johnston School should be added to the map.

Member Smunt noted that Route 25 was incorrectly marked south of Route 64, he said everything needs to be shifted to right along the river.

Member Penny also noted a correction that St. Patrick's School will be relocated to off of Randall Rd.

Mr. Lavigne distributed and reviewed the Roads and Streets Map.

The Task Force noted missing traffic signals, future traffic signals, and also recognized extra traffic signals.

Mr. Lavigne distributed and reviewed the Trails and Transit Map.

Mr. Lavigne stated that all the Legends on all of the maps will be supplemented by text to let everyone know where everything is located.

Chairman Armstrong discussed bits and pieces of the railroad not being annexed in, and since the railroad is abandoned, the existing plan calls for a bike trail, but as far as future use a decision and recommendation needs to be made as to what this corridor should be used for which is all part of this process.

Mr. Lavigne said that with a map like this regional context can be shown to the trail system.

Chairman Armstrong said he feels that a separate map with the regional trails also would be useful.

5. Discussion of Preliminary Issues

Mr. Lavigne distributed and reviewed an eight page Memorandum for discussion in regard to Comprehensive issues and opportunities.

Discussion regarding the East Main Street retail area was had in regard to repositioning the entire site, where the industrial part would be screened off and would maximize the view from Kirk and Route 64 being the best approach.

Task Force discussed Pheasant Run and what a great catalyst for activity it is but that there are no sidewalks in the area for people to venture out by foot to area restaurants and shopping.

Chairman Armstrong said that since the state wants to have wide rights of way, it already exists in that area and we do not need to cut into existing parking lots or existing stormwater basins in order to handle that capacity.

Mr. Lavigne said that in regard to the Main St. Corridor, it's a cross section of the development of St. Charles; there are all types of development there, from initial historical to some recent developments. Mr. Lavigne said he feels that recommendations for commercial development along Route 64 should be mindful of the location on the corridor.

Chairman Armstrong noted different characteristics of sites on the corridor, such as the depth of the sites located near Dunham Road.

Mr. Lavigne said that some issues occur where the railroad tracks cross and create oddly shaped parcels, which creates friction between the commercial and residential areas.

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to growth and annexation that opportunities are limited with Campton Hills emerging on the west side, but there are some opportunity's and this plan may want to re-visit the city's policy and annexation for developed and undeveloped sites.

Chairman Armstrong asked Mr. Lavigne to outline the future annexation policy with the boundaries of our facility planning area because he feels that will be a big deal if we want to change that rather than just bringing in a few parcels and it would help us with some guidance and the capacity that we have. Chariman Armstrong also said it would be helpful down the road to get an opinion of what type of additional capacity we have in the two sewage treatment plants. Mr. Lavigne noted that part of the survey to Public Works was a capacity issue and there were none sited. Chairman Armstrong said there is none sited because we do not have any growth sited and that's what needs to be looked at in order to make an informed decision, he said he personally would be surprised to see the City Council take an aggressive annexation stand point with the exception of possible in-fill.

Chairman Armstrong noted that the city has boundary agreements with other municipalities including South Elgin, West Chicago and Geneva, and he didn't think we have one with Campton Hills but that he feels that should be a recommendation to establish an agreement with them. Mr. Lavigne agreed and said that would be a recommendation in the plan because the last thing wanted is a developer negotiating between two communities.

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to School District 303 the Superintendent indicated schools are at capacity and needed improvement so talking about growth and annexation there's going to be the need for coordination with District 303 to be sure they can accommodate new kids or that land use recommendations foster a type of development that does not generate a lot of school children. Chairman Armstrong said it would be helpful to have more data than just the schools are at capacity, for instance which schools are at capacity and which ones will be at capacity in 10 years, what are the projections.

Ms. Tungare asked Mr. Lavigne how this will work, will there be follow up conversations with these public facilities. Mr. Lavigne said there are a lot of questions that were chosen not to be answered so there is a list of things that need to be followed up on.

Mr. Lavigne suggested in regard to the Kane County facilities, possibly developing the frontage parking lot at the Kane County building on Randall Road seeing as though employees all park behind the building.

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to the residential conversion that the fringe of downtown is going to be susceptible to residential conversions. Chairman Armstrong stated that there is a Zoning Ordinance that is Business Transitional based on the 1996 policy, but there is a question as to what we want the policy to be from 2010 to 2030-2040. Chairman Armstrong said as far as policy and going beyond just commercial, if it's a house, should the house retain residential character, should the Plan Commission and City Council draft regulation that would promote that? We are not looking at widening the Ordinance so much as looking at how we want the Ordinance to be applied.

Mr. Lavigne commented that wayfinding signs in the community are stellar.

Aldr. Bessner asked how much proportion of open space the city has right now in terms of ratio of acreage.

Mr. Lavigne said he could get that information. He said the NRPA recommends 10 acres per 1,000 is healthy and that the City has to be way over that. Mr. Lavigne stated that Park Dedication requirements cannot improve your open space stature, what could be said is new developments will not impact our old space ratio, so you cannot use it to increase the ratio but you can use it to maintain.

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to sidewalks that something he would ask to be considered is AASHTO which is the organization that regulates transportation and has come up with a formal position that a community can permit bikes on sidewalks, and then be able to accommodate bikes with a bicycle yielding to a pedestrian and possibly come up with a wider standard for those designated bike shares. Chairman Armstrong suggested making roadways wide enough to have a safe shoulder.

Ms. Malay asked where the PR is in regard to the Community Workshops and that the website is confusing and the information really needs to be searched for. Ms. Malay requested that the information be sent to her electronically.

The Task Force answered that a press release went out, the marquee at the Arcada, on Facebook, The Den, the City's Website and a that flyers and post cards would also be located at City Hall and the library.

6. Discussion on community Outreach
a. Community Workshop-August 31st

Chairman Armstrong confirmed that the members of the Task Force, for influential reasons, are encouraged to not attend the workshops but to rather just hear feedback.

b. Key Person Interviews

Mr. Colby discussed the Focus Group Interview list.

Ms. Tungare asked if the Task Force members would like to be involved in group discussion for the key person interviews and also if there is a need to interview members of the City Council under this forum.

The Task Force feels that interviewees would be more candid without their presence and that City Council member interviews should be done one on one not as a group.

c. Area Workshops

Member Penny asked if members of the Task Force should attend workshops and also if the east side workshop could not be scheduled for Oct. 4th.

Mr. Lavigne said yes if it affects your area, then you can attend.

Mr. Gardner noted that the area workshops are designated to discuss general problems in those areas not issues all over the City.

7. Meeting Announcements: Next Community Plan Task Force Meeting scheduled for October 26, 2011 at 7pm in Dens A&B. Community Workshop scheduled for August 31, 2011 at 7pm – City Council Chambers.

8. Additional Business

9. Adjournment at 9:25pm