

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TASK FORCE
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2011 – 7:00 P.M., DENS A & B**

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

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Devin Lavigne, Houseal Lavigne Associates
Russell Colby-Planning Division Manager
Matthew O'Rourke-Planner

Call to Order

The St. Charles Comprehensive Plan Task Force meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Armstrong.

2. Approval of Minutes for October 26, 2011

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed by voice vote to accept the minutes of the October 26, 2011 meeting.

3. Presentation and Review of Existing Conditions

Mr. Lavigne stated that what the Task Force is looking at is the first three chapters of the final plan and that it basically summarizes everything to date- the outreach summaries that had been gone through a couple weeks ago are included verbatim, and the maps and figures discussed previously are included and preceded by some discussion. Mr. Lavigne said he would like to have this put on- line for the community to start seeing some progress.

• **Section 1-Overview of Introduction and Background**

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to the Overview that this would be the introduction and background and will be in the final plan. The Community Profile piece will be merged with the Introduction and Background so that there will not be extensive and exhaustive part of the Comprehensive Plan that focuses on existing conditions. Mr. Lavigne said as we move into the plan it will focus on setting the table for the organization of the plan and the planning process.

Member Smunt made reference to in paragraph 1 which identifies St. Charles as the largest city in Kane County and made the correction to 4th largest in area and 3rd largest in population. Mr. Lavigne said it is phrased in a sentence about population. Chairman Armstrong said he didn't feel anyone would mistake that for geography and as long as it's not inaccurate it's fine.

Member Rabchuk mentioned a comment made in regard to the City's aim to avoid the use of PUDs in the future. Mr. Colby explained that this was identified in the RFP for the project and the City historically has relied too much on that to negotiate with developers. Member Rabchuk asked what the definition of a PUD is. Mr. Colby replied that it's any type of development form

from a strip mall to a residential neighborhood, any type of development where the zoning requirements and the plans have been negotiated by the developer and the city. Mr. Lavigne stated that the language came from the RFP, but that he feels it should maybe say minimize the use of PUDs and that they could put in the language to provide some predictability for both the residents and developers.

Member Bessner called attention to a comment made in regard to the lack of annexation moving forward, he asked if the updated plan will completely move away from that. Mr. Colby replied that was also in the RFP and that the City wanted to identify that most of future growth would not be through annexation because of limited opportunities. There are some opportunities for annexation, but not as significant as opportunities for redevelopment within the city. Member Smunt asked if areas on the map in St. Charles Township could ever be annexed at same point. Chairman Armstrong said yes but if we did that we would be annexing in as-built environments and not looking at something new and it becomes more of a liability because they are not built to the City's standards. Member Rabchuk feels the City needs to have some boundary agreements in place with Campton Hills especially. Mr. Colby said there is not an agreement with Campton Hills, but there are agreements with Geneva, West Chicago, Wayne and South Elgin and that the planning areas on the maps generally reflect the boundaries as agreed to. Chairman Armstrong asked if maps could be distributed with those surrounding boundaries because it defines what existing land use we are talking about and why we stop at certain points. Mr. Lavigne said yes he could insert that with the existing land use, he also recommended color shading steps so it's obvious where the document sits in the process.

Member Doyle made reference to the sentence in the first paragraph that states St. Charles had gone from the camp of just a few Potawatomi Indians. He wondered if that was an accurate description. Mr. Lavigne suggested talking off line about things of that type. Chairman Armstrong said he felt this was not a big issue, but that if any off line concerns came through toward any material along those lines to call him and it could be discussed. Mr. Lavigne said there was nothing there that cannot be changed.

- **Section 2-Community Outreach**

Member Penny questioned on page 8 the bullet point that stated the City suffers from a lack of competitiveness and high external market repetition. Mr. Lavigne said it means that the City can't compete with its neighboring communities, but remember that this section is just a rehash of what was heard by the Task Force and not an actual statement.

Chairman Armstrong said in regard to the St. Charles Mall property and being listed as vacant, that it should be listed as cleared because it is not a vacant building, it is no longer there, it should maybe say former site of St. Charles Mall.

Member Penny questioned in using the term "charm" to refer to the town. She questioned what that would mean to a developer. Mr. Lavigne said he feels it means attention to detail. Chairman Armstrong said he feels in a Comprehensive Plan it's a fine word, but that in an Ordinance it's not a definable word. Member Smunt said in this case "charm" was used in conjunction with "character" and he feels it means the same thing, and that charm implies an emotional response to the character that's being talked about, and that we should keep the emotion response out and drop the word "charm" but keep the word "character". Mr. Lavigne reminded the Task Force that these are comments from workshops and the community, but that if in the future, if charm is seen as a recommendation, to bring it to his attention.

Member Gaugel pointed out that in the chart of issues and positives, if they could elaborate more on what the positives are, and to also put headings on the two charts.

Task Force had a discussion in regard to removing the dam and Chairman Armstrong suggested that if that became a recommendation that a meeting should be scheduled for that topic alone.

Member Doyle suggested that for readers that were not able to make it to any of the workshops to maybe bump up the size of the text or a bar across the top to draw attention to the fact that the information has been gathered from all the different workshops.

- **Section3-Community Profile**

Chairman Armstrong said that in this section a couple of times he noticed that it seems to go beyond existing conditions into recommendations. For example under Office, the sentence that states “While offices create a considerable amount of foot traffic during the day, their presence alone does not guarantee steady foot traffic at all hours of the day. As a result, they should be mixed with other uses where possible to ensure that areas do not feel abandoned during evening hours.” Chairman Armstrong feels the recommendation is not a bad one but he is not sure that in the existing conditions report that that’s where we should be heading. Mr. Lavigne agreed and said that this is great text and this is going to go into the plan but not now, we will save it for later. Member Doyle said the text is describing how we currently define land uses and what they are appropriate for, he said he doesn’t see these as recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan per say, he feels its descriptive information about the land uses and what the scope of that land use is. Chairman Armstrong said until the recommending sentence that states “As a result they should be mixed with other uses where possible to ensure that areas do not feel abandoned during evening hours”, he feels the point is valid, but what concerns him is the recommendation part of it. Mr. Lavigne said they were trying to describe the existing land use and sometimes it’s the existing land use that should be there.

Member Doyle said in regard to Vacant and Undeveloped Land, is it significant, and is there any benefit to distinguishing green field parcels from brown field parcels or formerly used parcels. Mr. O’Rourke said yes but to maybe do that in the future land use map, because vacant is vacant, but when developers or whoever are looking at new sites, they will want to know what is wanted there more than what was there before. Mr. Lavigne said the only time that would matter is if there may be some environmental issues, but that even a farm is a land use. Member Doyle asked what defines a green field, he feels that term is bantered around and it has some cache in his mind in terms of land use decisions, he asked if it is a technical term. He said maybe this is a future land use issue and he feels maybe it should be revisited later on with the future land use issues. Mr. Lavigne said vacant will not be a future land use, there will be no parcels called out to be vacant, we will assign a land use to everything, there may be parcels called out for agricultural but he doubts it. Member Doyle said he perceives a difference between something like Corporate Reserves and the old Applied Composites site. Mr. Lavigne said he doesn’t feel that can be captured within a map and that when we get to the land use map something like the Corporate Reserves will be commercial or office and the Applied Composite site would be residential land use, and that even at that stage we may not be able to tell the difference between the two except for the land use being different. He asked Mr. Doyle if he is more looking to tell a story of what has happened there and how does it affect policy. Mr. Doyle answered that to the degree that there is any material difference within this vacant/undeveloped category and in identifying those categories would yield possibly different future land uses, then to him it’s just a matter of describing those differences of the categories. If they truly are not different categories, then that is a consensus of the group. Member Rabchuk said he feels that whether it’s brown field or green

field it doesn't matter, and that when we come up with a plan it doesn't matter what was behind it to begin with. Member Doyle said it goes back to smart development and density and the use of strategic density versus just doing density everywhere then it's not smart development and just high density all over the place. Chairman Armstrong said smart development also is a principal of developing where you have existing infrastructure you can tap into as opposed to extending infrastructure into new areas. Member Bessner said in the future if we are going to decide what type of parcel it should be, if we don't consider what was there before and if it was a hazardous type of thing, are we going to have a parcel that we may think should be residential and may not end up being that because of issues with the site. Member Rabchuk said developers will have to go over that in great detail before they would ever submit a plan for approval. Member Doyle said the reason he has brought this up is because we have had a number of high density proposed developments that he feels have made compelling arguments and he is concerned as a Plan Commissioner with having a clean rationale for those kinds of distinctions for developers. He said his concern is not identifying those rationales and not having the descriptive data to differentiate why high density smart development can happen in certain places and not others. Mr. Lavigne said he would argue that the past use of a site shouldn't dictate the future use of a site, the future use of the site should be determined by what the community feels is appropriate.

The Task Force reviewed the Parks and Open Space section. Chairman Armstrong commented that the Land-Cash Ordinance during his involvement with the city has been updated several times and his observation is there is a safety valve where anybody who wishes to say that's too much has the right to bring their appraisal and show that the land they are developing is not worth that and the fact that nobody does that tells him that the city is not asking enough. It was noted that the text referencing the Land-Cash ordinance is from the Park District's Master Plan. Chairman Armstrong suggested that there be a box around the Park District Master Plan section. Member Rabchuk said in regard to existing parks he would challenge the Park District intention that they need to do all these big parks. Member Bessner asked if there was any reason to call out the lack of open spaces in the northwest quadrant, he said there was some direction given at some of the workshops that possibly there would be plazas and more open spaces in each quadrant based on what we have downtown. Chairman Armstrong said in the unincorporated environment which is not walkable by design because of no sidewalks, he is not sure the small stuff for kids to walk to is really what we want, but they also have the largest facilities, for example Leroy Oakes and Primrose Farm Park. Member Rabchuk said yes but realistically the Park District has been following their master plan and have been developing the big Otter Creek type projects. Chairman Armstrong feels that looking at the whole west of the river and north of Main almost all of that is outside city limits in a non-walkable environment, he doesn't think anyone would expect to see the scattering of parks like is seen in the existing city.

- **Demographics and Market Overview**

Chairman Armstrong questioned the racial and ethnic composition, he said he is assuming anything that is appearing in this would be something that we are going to develop plans on, and he asked how relevant the racial and ethnic composition of the city is for developing future plans. Member Rabchuk said he agrees that there should be no relevance and it does not belong in the plan due to it not guiding any decisions. Member Doyle said he doesn't feel it will explicitly drive policy but that it certainly is a huge factor in public discourse about public policy as is income. He said he is not inclined to omit it because it's part of our public discourse whether we want it to be or not.

Member Gaugel asked in regard to age as being a considering factor that leads him to come to the conclusion that we would be gearing things toward the elderly as the population is getting older

which is proven by the data, he asked if that's the same conclusion, or is that the conclusion we want to come to for planning down the road. Member Rabchuk said he has always felt that age is a key factor in any planning effort of this sort because it has major impact on transportation and services; he said maybe he is wrong but he does not see the connection on a racial basis, that he feels this point in time it's not driving any factors. Member Doyle said he feels that the significance of the racial and economic income information has to do with multi-family residential development. Member Rabchuk said he disagrees and that this is an income driven thing and not ethnic. Member Smunt said it's just a statistic. Mr. Lavigne said aside from how does this turn into policy, think of the plan as a developer, realtor or broker are going to use to formulate their plans. Mr. O'Rourke said that by taking it out it may look like the City is trying to hide something.

Chairman Armstrong pointed out that in reference to describing Randall Rd. and Fabyan in Batavia that it's on the Geneva/Batavia border, he also said in regard to the regional competition that St. Charles residents are ten times more likely to go to Stratford Mall than to Fox Valley Mall. Task Force members disagreed and said they would go to Oakbrook before either of them. Chairman Armstrong said he feels Stratford Mall for the east side is a reasonable competition. Mr. Colby also mentioned the Outlet Mall in Aurora.

Mr. Lavigne asked if the Issues and Opportunities memo from Aug. 19 should be used in the plan. He said if a resident is looking to find out where we are at in the process that the memo is a pretty substantial memo. The Task Force agreed to include the memo in the report.

Member Doyle said he felt that the 2010 income distribution chart was very useful and should in the report.

4. Update on Project Schedule

Mr. Colby mentioned the Visioning Workshop and Mr. Lavigne said he would like to challenge each Task Force member to bring five people. He said one thing that will be added to the website is a community character survey and an exercise will be done which will show pictures of both new development and existing development in the city and see people's reaction to it.

5. Meeting Announcements:

Community Visioning Workshop, Wednesday, November 30, 2011 at 7:00pm in Council Chambers.

6. Additional Business-None.

7. Adjournment at 8:20pm.