

**MINUTES  
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TASK FORCE  
THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2012 – 7:00 P.M., DENS A & B**

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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  
Rita Tungare-Director of Community Development

**1. 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 November 10, 2011**

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed by voice vote to accept the minutes of the November 10, 2011 meeting.

Chairman Armstrong noted that there were members of the public present. He said after items 3 & 4 he would ask for public comment to take in information in an orderly fashion.

**3. Review of Vision, Goals and Objectives**

Mr. Colby reviewed a memorandum from Houseal Lavigne that listed the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and a list of Goals and Objectives.

Chairman Armstrong asked for comments on the Vision portion.

Member Gaugel said that the statement "College facility has injected additional intellectual resources into the downtown" made is sound like a certainty and like it was part of the plan. Chairman Armstrong said he felt the same and he wasn't quite sure that was intended. Member Doyle commented that after reading it he envisioned the City having nonprofit property uses in the downtown area. He said there was public comment about various cultural destinations and he thinks a balance needs to be thought about between nonprofit and commercial and retail uses.

Chairman Armstrong said he feels the sentence may have been intended to read "a college that is located nearby". He said it's not clear from the statement made in the memo. Mr. Lavigne said at several of the meetings it was heard that there was a desire for some sort of catalytic something downtown, and a college or institute of higher learning came up several times, but he agreed that he did not like the

wording. Member Smunt suggested using “nearby college facility” because it has yet to be designated. Chairman Armstrong noted a college does not automatically become a tax exempt use.

Member Doyle said there were comments to have a cultural center in the downtown area which is nonprofit and he questioned how many nonprofit parcels can be absorbed in the downtown area. He feels it would be great to have the whole downtown regarded as a cultural center. Member Smunt said he feels the whole downtown as it is now is a cultural center and it just needs further development.

Member Penny said in terms of culture, she remembers mention of the Arcada and area around it being more of an entertainment area with the possibility of an art gallery.

Member Rabchuk said he feels it’s focused too narrowly on just culture, he said downtown needs to be very diverse, it will not work otherwise.

Mr. Doyle said he feels the vision statement as a whole should include more attention to commercial partnerships so it works for multiple audiences, including developers.

Member Smunt said in regard to the use of the word “charm” that it should be prevented and maybe replaced with “character”.

Member Bessner said he questions the lack of any kind of terminology regarding pedestrian friendliness, referring to Main St. as a whole. Member Penny agreed and said something should be listed there to indicate that it would be easier for pedestrians to get around.

Chairman Armstrong asked what “new neighborhoods” being built between now and 2027 means, and also about the statement that “Apartment development has been stabilized by a transition to greater ownership as condominiums in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods”. Mr. Lavigne said he thinks that came from more of the concern that on the west side there are too many apartments. Chairman Armstrong asked how a Comprehensive Plan would even achieve a conversion to condominiums. Mr. Lavigne said it wouldn’t, but it expresses the desire for that to happen. He said depending on how big of an issue it is, the City could provide some financial incentives, such as assistance to create covered parking, for example. He said it would depend how badly the issue needs to be addressed. Chairman Armstrong said that would express a preference to turn existing rentals into condominiums. Member Penny said she thinks people are looking for private ownership rather than renting.

Ms. Tungare said based on what was heard at the workshops, there is a preference for new development with owner occupied condominiums, which would balance the percentage of the housing stock that is rental. Chairman Armstrong said the word transition made him think conversion. Member Doyle said he read it as the transition of the housing market and the economy recovering. Member Rabchuk said in some manner the density will go up overall across the City and long term the preference is ownership over the increase in apartment units, something like condo’s and townhomes with a more dense footprint to keep the City’s population growing to some extent without overwhelming the tax base. Ms. Tungare said there is an assumption that the density will go up in terms of development and that it’s a policy question of whether the community wants to see the City growing between now and 2027. Ms. Tungare suggested changing the verbiage to make it simpler to avoid confusion. Mr. Colby agreed and feels it’s more of a balance and that based on comments at the workshops, he feels there was not an expectation that existing units would be converted to condominiums. Member Penny said from the comments she got that people just do not want any more apartments. Mr. Lavigne said some people did not want any multifamily and some that said multi family is okay but has to be owner-occupied.

Mr. Doyle said he feels the issue is the quality of the housing and visual impact on the community and owner versus rental, but another technique is form-based codes and interior form-based codes, which will

guarantee a certain quality which will therefore have a certain economic impact. He said he would like the Task Force to consider multiple techniques to mitigate the community's concerns and provide flexibility for development. Chairman Armstrong said it's difficult to make that requirement and it's also unlawful. Member Penny said being too restrictive and too specific leaves the City no chance to adjust to the market and the economy. The Task Force agreed that instead of using "attractive housing" to maybe use "high quality" instead, and to change the verbiage to state that "the community desires a higher proportion of owner occupied housing in comparison to rental housing". Mr. Lavigne suggested saying "to have the multifamily contributing to the great character and image of the community" would express the desire for more owner-occupied developments but also good looking development.

Mr. Gaugel said in regard to "the former Kane County Fairgrounds has become a centerpiece of redevelopment", he knows it was expressed but that it is not necessarily in the City's control short of condemnation of the property and redevelopment. He said it implies that the City will redevelop that site and that is not a certainty. Chairman Armstrong said to him it is stating that if anyone wants to develop that area, it says yes, the City is ready to work with them. Member Smunt said by stating "former site" it implies it will not be there one day. Chairman Armstrong said yes it implies that as a preference and that it would be ok if it went away. Mr. Colby said one idea was that the Fairgrounds not move entirely but be reconfigured on the property away from Randall Road.

Member Rabchuk mentioned the reference to Pheasant Run and questioned whether this acknowledged a change at the property. Chairman Armstrong said it implies that we want Pheasant Run to stay there; it's not invited for redevelopment, but does not mean that it cannot be redeveloped.

Member Doyle said in regard to the vision of Charlestowne Mall, his vision includes the redevelopment of the parcel. Member Penny said she feels the community wants something commercial there. Member Doyle said in his group that multifamily residential had come up on Main St. on the east side. Chairman Armstrong said he thinks for Charlestowne Mall, that it's open to redevelopment to the same extent as the Fairgrounds.

Craig Bobowiec-508 Cedar St.-said he had gone to a couple of the workshops and that the general growth of the City had never been addressed and in looking at the 2011 city survey, housing was really low on the list, where commercial was really high. He said he is looking for a specific goal or rate, and at some point will there be a stoppage on more subdivisions because the City is growing to a capacity that the general public does not want. Chairman Armstrong said the question can be answered largely by the amount of available land, which is running out, due to South Elgin, Campton Hills, Geneva, West Chicago and Wayne. Mr. Bobowiec said he just keeps hearing how things are going to become denser. Mr. Lavigne suggested to not put a number on it but it could be said that the population is stabilized and experiencing only moderate growth as additional units are added to the downtown. He said if density were added to downtown it wouldn't make a noticeable blip in terms of the City's population.

Jim Morris-The Examiner-referenced Lexington Club and reconfiguring the plan to almost all single-family, and single-family is going to be very limiting in terms of growth.

Vanessa Bell-Lasota-1610 Howard St.-said in regard to growth, she would like to see more infill redevelopment and quality in new neighborhoods.

Sue Hedkie-1031 Kehoe Dr.-asked if there are currently housing codes for older neighborhoods. Member Smunt suggested the draft state that residential infill redevelopment has to be sensitive to surrounding architecture. He noted that areas that are not designated historic are market and builder driven and based upon the education of the architect.

Joe Masiokas- 23 N. 7<sup>th</sup> St.-said in regard to the College idea that the Foxfield Theatre building would be a good size for a satellite campus. He said in regard to the comment about the transition to ownership, he feels that's about the First Street development converting to apartments instead of condominiums, but he feels they will convert back to condominiums once the market becomes better. He said the Fairgrounds may at some point decide to move to property bought on Route 47. Member Rabchuk noted the Fairgrounds is private property and he was unsure of they owned the property on Route 47.

Ms. Hedkie said in regard to Charlestowne Mall, she would like for it to stay an enclosed mall versus an open outdoor mall due to contending with weather. Mr. Morris mentioned a psychological study done that proved that people prefer an outdoor mall due to being able to see the entrance of the store and being able to go back to their cars to drive to each store.

### Residential Goals

Mr. Lavigne said that they do define the difference between a goal and an objective and the strategic objectives that will get to the goals and how they will fit into the final plan. He said in regard to the residential goals there will be recommendations, the land use plan and policies for land use. He said the land use policies will be for the developers to turn to, the objectives are things the City needs to do.

Member Bessner asked in regard to neighborhoods of St. Charles, if there is any emphasis of establishing identity of each neighborhood or promoting neighborhoods. Mr. Lavigne said we are looking to build community not individual neighborhoods. Chairman Armstrong said that may not be a bad idea in regard to historic neighborhoods because they are already identified. Member Bessner said he was thinking more on a natural scale of what already exists and what might in the future. Member Doyle said with certain historic neighborhoods and in wanting to drive people to downtown sometimes those types of efforts on the City's part entail some way finding effort. Member Penny said she thinks the City's neighborhoods are identified by grade schools.

Member Doyle suggested adding affordability as a goal. Ms. Tungare asked if that was a comment that was heard by the public. Member Penny said the current document does address affordable housing because that is a goal of the Council. Chairman Armstrong suggested stating "maintaining existing affordable housing stock", unless we are talking about building new units that are not rental but affordable, which will be tricky but can be done.

Member Smunt suggested in Goal #2 taking out "notable" and leave in "historic homes".

Mr. Lavigne asked if in Goal #1 if adding the word "diversity" would address affordability. Member Doyle said he feels they are different. Member Penny said the Housing Commission was established but it was never desired to have sections of town as affordable, there just needs to be affordable availability for people that live and work here. Ms. Tungare said in regard to using the term diversity, it means diversity of housing not people. Member Doyle noted the Family Circle #1 rating is due to schools, parks and affordability and we don't want to lose that.

Member Penny said in regard to Goal #1 she feels the permitting process is very important to include.

Member Gaugel said in Goal #3 regarding preventative maintenance programs he doesn't understand what that would entail and is there anything new to that as far as what is already in place. Member Penny said you don't want to lose that with all the foreclosures.

Member Penny said under Goal #3, Item #3 to keep the word "ensure" because it seems to imply enforceable and not suggestive.

Ms. Tungare said the zoning bulk requirements are objective and the design aspects are subjective, so she feels the design side should be left flexible. Chairman Armstrong said the Zoning Ordinance is only a few years old and addresses those issues.

Member Gaugle asked if in Goal #3 if it means new neighborhoods or new housing, because where would new neighborhoods be located. The Task Force suggested using new housing instead of new neighborhoods.

Ms. Tungare said she has concerns with the first objective under Goal #2, the “expedient and flexible permitting process”. She feels “flexible” could mean exceptions. The Task Force agreed “flexible” should be taken out and keep “expedient”.

Member Doyle said in Goal #1, Objective 5 part of discouraging cut through traffic is to have adequate traffic capacity on main routes. Chairman Armstrong said he felt it was adequately discussed in the transportation section.

#### Commercial and Office Areas

Member Penny suggested adding “mixed use” to Goal #1. Mr. Lavigne explained the definition of “mixed use” (typically residential over retail in one building) vs. a mix of uses on a site. Member Rabchuk said if the downtown area were to expand, a way to potentially do that would be retail first floor and condos and apartments above.

Ms. Tungare asked why “mixed use” couldn’t be seen outside of downtown. Mr. Lavigne said it could but from comments and what the desire is for downtown, you would want mixed use to stay there. Member Doyle suggested transit oriented mixed use. Chairman Armstrong said that is something to think about.

Member Gaugel said Goal #2, Objective #7 asked how promoting the relocation of certain types of “less desirable businesses” can be defined. Member Doyle said half the bars in downtown are considered undesirable. Chairman Armstrong said the purpose of this is the basis of legislation, it is a policy not a law and Council is asked that if it is a use deemed inappropriate to not allow that. Member Doyle said he is of the opinion that you legislate when something is a problem and he feels it shouldn’t be an objective. Mr. Lavigne said he feels a better word would be “incompatible”. The Task Force agreed.

Member Bessner said Goal #3, Objective #4 regarding Main St. improvements and pedestrian-oriented and walkable shopping that there needs to be some sort of buffer on both sides of Main Street in order for this to happen and he wondered if Main St. will ever change. Mr. Lavigne said between Objective #3 and #4 to add “to improve the pedestrian friendliness of Main St.” The Task Force agreed.

#### Industrial Areas

Member Gaugle asked for an example for Objective #7, incompatible development encroachment. Mr. Lavigne said for instance, when the Kung Fu place and the soccer place start moving into industrial space, it starts to affect industrial operations. Member Doyle asked if there are regulations and codes in place to prevent indoor recreational use. Mr. O’Rourke said if these types of businesses do not locate in this type of business park and it’s not permitted, they will be forced toward prime retail areas, for instance, do you want the old Borders to be an indoor soccer place. Chairman Armstrong said if it is an incompatible use, the Plan Commission and Council will decide through the Zoning Ordinance. Member Doyle said if the objectives are big and not defined, he is skeptical that they will get defined through City Code. Mr. Lavigne said he feels these types of uses generate a vibrancy that can contribute to commercial areas and they do not at contribute at all when they are in an industrial area. Member Rabchuk said his concern

with them being in commercial areas is the safety and the parking. Ms. Tungare said she feels it may be a bit too ambiguous and vague and a couple of years from now people may not understand what this means and therefore the wording should be tightened up a bit and elaborate more on what “incompatible” means. Mr. Lavigne agreed and said he would work on the wording.

#### Transportation and Circulation

Chairman Armstrong asked about Goal #1, Objective #4 and what “multi-modal” means. Mr. Lavigne said it should be changed to “an effective pedestrian connection”.

Member Rabchuk asked if Objective #10 regarding priority parking spaces for “no and low emission vehicles” should be committed to. Chairman Armstrong said this is for charging stations. Member Doyle said there is a maximum distance people are willing to walk from their car to a store, and if we do something that puts a pressure on that distance it could box us in. Mr. Lavigne suggested to maybe not use “provide” but “consider”. Chairman Armstrong said he would be more interested in seeing charging stations. Ms. Tungare said we need to get out of the mode of thinking for today, but long term.

Chairman Armstrong gave an example for Goal #2, Objective #7 regarding “logical near misses” regarding disconnects between sidewalks. The Task Force agreed on using the terminology “completion of interrupted sidewalks” or “gaps” instead of “near misses”.

Member Penny said the traffic signal on Main St. and 1<sup>st</sup> needs to be more pedestrian friendly. Chairman Armstrong said IDOT controls the timing. Ms. Tungare suggested pedestrian timers. Mr. Lavigne suggested making a case to the state that there is not enough time for pedestrians to cross and IDOT would almost be forced to change it. He said we could add “pedestrian friendly” in between Objective #5 and #6.

Member Smunt suggested for Goal #2, Objective #11 to add “pedestrian” to working with police on bicycle safety because there are near-miss sidewalks all around St. Charles East High School and there are crosswalks but no sidewalks leading to them.

Member Doyle said for Goal #2, Objective #5 that Prairie and Oak streets will be an issue for pedestrian traffic. He said increasing vehicular capacity on the collectors is needed to keep cut-through traffic off the side streets, but keeping the cross walks safe will need to be focused on.

Mr. Lavigne said for Objective #5 that West Main St. should be added due to heavy traffic, not only East Main St. Mr. Doyle mentioned adding collectors and pedestrian refuge islands on wider streets.

Chairman Armstrong referenced Goal #3, Objective #3 regarding PACE restructuring and questioned aligning land use policy on something that another agency can change on a whim. Mr. Lavigne said maybe it does not need to be there, but it may manifest in the land use plan. Member Penny suggested using words “coordinating with PACE” so that land use policies match the routes. Member Rabchuk agreed and thought a general statement would be better.

Member Doyle said in Objective #8 that adequate setback needs to be kept in place for road widening for Rt. 64. Mr. O’Rourke noted that setbacks have already been reduced to 20 ft. on Route 64, Randall Rd. and Kirk Rd. Member Doyle mentioned a consideration with the setbacks being reduced but the land has not been developed yet. Mr. O’Rourke said that Kane County was contacted when the amendment was proposed and in many areas with a wide right of way, they felt it was sufficient for future plans. Ms. Tungare said maybe there needs to be verbiage that acknowledges there needs to be sufficient consideration given in thinking ahead about transit.

### Parks, Open Spaces and Environmental Features

Member Rabchuk asked for Objective #5 to be strengthened.

Member Doyle suggested adding “working cooperatively with the Park District to promote small-scale playgrounds and pocket parks”. Chairman Armstrong agreed. Member Penny said it would allow people to walk more. Mr. Lavigne said it should be added with Objective #4 for underserved areas. He noted the park donation is controlled by City Ordinance.

### Image and Identity

Member Smunt said Objective #3 suggested striking “two” and in place putting in “current and future historic districts and landmark sites”. He also suggested for Objective #4 to switch “historic districts” to “historic areas”. He drew attention to Objective #11 that there should be a priority to get rid of the overhead utility wires in historic areas.

Member Penny asked if “collection boxes” and “cell towers” could be added to this section. Chairman Armstrong said it will be difficult to regulate antennas but with the structures holding the antennas we have a little more leeway. Mr. Lavigne said the companies can be worked with as far making these less obtrusive.

### Economic Development

Member Bessner suggested adding to Goal #2 to support the CVB, Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, and Pride of the Fox organization. The Task Force suggested not to specify by name but to just add other organizations. Member Penny said she feels CVB should be added as well.

Member Doyle said he feels that the Economic Development portion of the document should be moved up because he feels it’s very important, possibly near the commercial part of the document and before transportation.

### City Services and Administration

Mr. O’Rourke called attention to Goal #1, Objective #2 being a duplicate because it is also listed under Community Facilities.

Member Doyle drew attention to Goal #1, Objective #10 that the city does not need to create an energy program because there is already one in place, it just needs to be promoted.

Member Doyle said Goal #2, Objective #4 that all the multiple news platforms should not be named, it should just be generalized as social networking and media.

Chairman Armstrong said Objective 8 is missing S. Elgin, West Chicago and Wayne should also be listed as an adjacent community, and Carol Stream taken out.

Member Doyle had a response to Mr. Bobowiec’s comment earlier in the meeting. He said the current plan does have a statement that specifies target residential densities, it says effectively throughout the City density will not exceed 10 dwelling units per acre and could go up to 20 dwelling units per acre in strategic locations. He asked if it would be beneficial to list the general desire and goal in terms of residential density throughout the City. Chairman Armstrong said he strongly supports that because everyone wants to push the density issue from a negotiating standpoint. Mr. Lavigne said he does not recommend putting an actual number in the document unless you put it under “establish appropriate densities within the City’s residential areas”. He said there will be a land use plan in later chapters where

land uses will be defined. He said typically you do not see density any more than 20 units per acre because that is where zoning gets into those specifics. He said the Comprehensive Plan should be more descriptive of what the areas should become. Member Doyle said when developers come to the City with large-scale developments and have gone through years of planning efforts with staff and then having things blow up, he feels there needs to be an articulated vision under a section of the memo in terms of the City vision and overall background density. Member Rabchuk said to some point he disagrees because there are some areas, for example like Pheasant Run, becoming for instance one day a senior living center and that being very high density and that a concern of St. Charles becoming like Naperville one day is not possible due to lack of open land. Member Penny said people want more commercial but more people are needed to have a market for commercial and she feels being so specific with density may not be good.

Chairman Armstrong said there is a limit to it because the Zoning Ordinance itself is where the limit is at, but it's mostly PUD applications received and most of them are not "by right" but were negotiated. He feels if there is nothing in the Comprehensive Plan to talk about it, it makes density not something to be considered in whether it meets the plan. He feels a list of why the density should be deviated from would be helpful. Mr. Lavigne suggested listing density ranges in the land use plan section, but he feels adding some sort of table listing a maximum density is not a good idea because it could be a reason for public opposition to this plan. Mr. Lavigne said as the land use plan is done, they will measure the densities of a few areas to get the range. Member Doyle mentioned smart development and said his vision is to have strategic density, where there are certain parcels that have been designated where a more intensive land use serves a public benefit. He said he feels density belongs in town and should taper off as it goes out of town.

Ms. Bell-Lasota asked to promote or maximize the community on-line mapping tool. She suggested to add "other organizations who have similar goals in their mission statements" under Economic Development Goal #2, Objective #1. Under Parks and Open Space#6, she suggested to also include sky line and open air space and windmills, which has come up in past conversation. Ms. Tungare said to maybe add that under infrastructure. Mr. O'Rourke said there was an Ordinance approved to allow wind energy devices in the industrial areas. Ms. Bell-Lasota said under Transportation and Circulation Goal #1, Objective #15, she suggested adding "periodically evaluate" rather than "establish" traffic and circulation management strategies to identify areas impacted by congestion at specific times, such as neighborhood blocks surrounding schools or major destinations. She also said in regard to using updated traffic studies that it could be more specific because she feels it's been a part of the slowness of some of the projects. She feels that provision might help the City incorporate routine and updated traffic studies in routine evaluations. Ms. Bell-Lasota said she would send an email with more suggestions and concerns.

Mr. Masiokas suggested under senior housing to change it to "affordable senior housing" to maintain diversity. He also suggested LED and LEP street lights to conserve energy.

Ms. Hedke suggested more support for the library, to expand the facility, and do something about the difficult parking situation. She also asked if the City could possibly revisit the idea of offering their own broad band internet service or Municipal Wi-Fi.

#### **4. Discussion of Key Focus Areas**

Mr. Colby noted a map of potential Key Focus Area boundaries prepared based on the RFP for the project. Mr. Lavigne said plans for East and West Main Street will focus more on the corridor aspect and look at the properties adjacent to the right of way. They could focus on cross access, access management, and things that will improve the function of the corridor along with beatification of the right of way.

Mr. Colby asked the Task Force for comments on each Key Focus Area.

- West Gateway/former St. Charles Mall site: Include Fairgrounds property and vacant sites, including Bricher Commons property behind Meijer and the Anderson property at the northeast corner of Rt. 38 and Bricher Road.
- Downtown: Boundaries to include the area from 7<sup>th</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- East Gateway/Charlestowne Mall: Include all of the Oliver-Hoffmann property NE of Charlestowne Mall and all of the Foxfield development (extend boundary east to Dunham Road). The East Main Street Corridor Plan will terminate at Dunham Road, not Fieldgate Dr.

**5. Meeting Announcements**

The next meeting will be scheduled sometime in late April or May. The location will be changed to Council Chambers to make it easier for the Task Force to address the public's questions and comments.

**6. Additional Business-None.**

**7. Adjournment at 9:48pm.**