

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TASK FORCE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2012 – 7:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBER**

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

Members Absent: Brian Doyle

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

1. 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 September 26, 2012

Mr. Gaugel made a correction to the name of the Chairman on Page 5.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed by voice vote to accept the minutes of the September 26, 2012 meeting as corrected.

3. Focus Area Plans: Review Open House comments and Finalize Plan Drafts

Mr. Lavigne discussed that the subarea plans cover areas that have the highest likelihood of change and that it is important to be sure that the Task Force feels good about the recommendations in the subarea plans before a complete plan draft is brought forward at the November 14, 2012 meeting.

a. Downtown

Mr. Lavigne asked if the subareas as listed on the agenda are in the order in which they would like them to be presented in the final document, with the Main St. Corridor as the fourth subarea. Mr. Gaugel said he feels Downtown should be first and for the others the order does not matter.

Mr. Lavigne said the subarea plan starts with an introduction and he feels the word "vision" should be changed to subarea goals and objectives, since there is already a vision statement. The Task Force agreed.

Mr. Lavigne said the Historic District and the text on the Fox River should be brought into the Framework Plan for more clarity and that also would allow for the Downtown Improvement Plan to add more substance to bring in some of the recommendations for potential redevelopment opportunities and also parking.

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to some of Tom Anderson's comments at the last meeting that, in reading the whole section of the downtown plan, there needs to be one figure that captures the essence of everything and he thinks some recommendations from the text needs to be brought into the catalyst sites to direct the readers further. As of right now there are no recommendations for the Historic guidelines in the section. Mr. Smunt said he agrees and that there are currently guidelines that exist but nothing having anything to do with development or redevelopment, they are only changes to existing structures and that it should be listed that development needs to follow guidelines that are in place.

Mr. Lavigne said the Main St. frontage should take precedence over the Gateway frontage and that the Catalyst Site Map should be zoomed in tighter to see more of what is going on. He said opportunity sites A and B need to be discussed because they were a big topic at the open house. Ms. Penny said there was talk years ago of the area being developed as a shopping area and that in listening to Mr. Anderson that a parking deck in that area may be a good thing. Mr. Rabchuk said it makes more sense to expand A and B for potential retail development with integral parking rather than specifically saying parking. He said whatever is done as far as development, including First Street, that parking has to be a key component and must be self-supporting. He suggested expanding the area for Sites A and B west to half way between 3rd and 4th streets and north to the railroad trestle for a potential for mixed use with integral parking.

Chairman Armstrong said he is inclined to agree with Mr. Rabchuk but asked if the purpose of separating A and B by State St. was to shy away from the idea of abandoning the right of way to build something across. Mr. Lavigne said no, just trying to think incrementally, but Sites A and B could be sectioned off and made larger and cross reference both sites. Mr. Rabchuk said he feels they need to be expanded for future growth. He said he would take north of Cedar and half way between 3rd and 4th so all of the VFW property would become part of Site B and then extend Site A up to the railroad bridge including the Terry Grove property on Rt. 31. Mr. Rabchuk said on the east side of Rt. 31 it should be green space, and the Carroll Tower parking would have to be compensated somehow in Sites A and B. There should be no river front parking. Mr. Smunt said he personally feels that Site B is the least desirable for commercial to line the property and the frontage would have to be to the west along 3rd St. and leave the vista open for pedestrians to get to the river. Chairman Armstrong said 3rd St. could be extended north to make it the primary entrance and relieve pressure on the left turn lane and reduce curb cuts along Rt. 31. Mr. Rabchuk said Rt. 31 is not pedestrian friendly but that there are ways architecturally to make other things work where there is an overhang over where people can walk under protected areas and they are 20-30ft. off of the street. Chairman Armstrong referenced this concept at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago, which he said looks dungeon like. Mr. Smunt said as he doesn't feel 2nd St. should have any access as far as pedestrian access.

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to Rt. 64 being more pedestrian friendly the recommendation should be that for Rt. 31 also and that parking should not be to the east but to the south. Chairman Armstrong said going up 3rd is doable but having a block where there is nothing and people have to walk over is where it gets difficult.

Mr. Bessner asked if there would be any restrictions in regard to the parking on the west side of Rt. 31. Chairman Armstrong said in blocking the river that will happen whether it's a building or a parking structure.

Mr. Smunt said he feels as long as there are suitable signs directing traffic to retail corridors with 3rd St. as a focus that it will work. Ms. Penny said maybe it should say surface parking preferred.

Mr. Lavigne said surface parking from the east side of Rt. 31 into a parking deck on the west side would be a trade-off to open things up to the river. Ms. Penny said maybe a policy to say what we want as opposed to what we don't want.

Public Comments

Tom Anderson said expanding areas west to 4th St. behind the VFW could tie in support to expand Site B going from Rt. 31 to 4th between State and Cedar. He suggested the surface lot on Rt. 31 is a buffer for the highway and supports Main St and to move the commercial focus to 3rd St., with parking behind Main St.

Mr. Rabchuk asked if Site K incorporates the detention pond and if not, why. Chairman Armstrong said no and if the area needed more stormwater it would make sense to not have all the little ponds there but most of that is already paved. Mr. Colby said the Brownstones own that detention pond. Mr. Rabchuk said that the corner lot at Prairie and 1st and the tire place, and as long as it's an area to be redeveloped, why not include that little piece.

Mr. Lavigne said a recommendation that was heard was to eliminate the dam. Mr. Rabchuk recalled discussion to put boulders in place on the south side for rapids for kayaking, which would also oxygenate the water at the same time, but that City Engineers think the Army Corp. would not allow that. Chairman Armstrong said it might be better to make the river an attraction and illuminate rather than saying eliminating the dam. Mr. Anderson said the dam issue has been discussed by the River Corridor Commission and that in eliminating the dam there is a risk of the water going down and the river could end up as a small stream and then lose a lot of economic activity to the north.

Mr. Anderson said in regard to Sites D, E, F and the infill of parking lots, these lots serve Main St. and to put a building there, unless you can show where to compensate the parking, he doesn't see how that will happen. Ms. Penny said to add a caveat with consideration of additional parking as part of the plan, that if your development is taking away parking it must compensate what is being lost, but that she feels to be too specific in the plan will not be good. Chairman Armstrong said yes, like is done with stormwater.

Mr. Anderson said First Street is short of parking and that the temporary parking lot has been full. Chairman Armstrong said he thinks that is because it is more convenient than the parking garage right now. Mr. Rabchuk said a year ago the Downtown Partnership did a study on the parking lots and in counting the number of total spaces at different times of day, it's not too bad, but that south First Street is horrible and that whatever development may become it has to have an adequate plan for parking.

John Glenn commented that he encourages more multi-story parking as an option. Chairman Armstrong said they are very expensive and he is not sure that developments being looked at would support it. He then mentioned land cash donations or something like it. Mr. Lavigne said it is called "cash in lieu parking" which means if they cannot provide parking on site they provide cash for the city to provide parking. Chairman Armstrong said it would be triggered by parking removal because the purpose of SSA-1A is to address the parking and not require it, otherwise its being constrained. Mr. Lavigne said call it "net parking impact" because you do not want every site to provide its own parking either because it takes away from a traditional downtown setting.

Vanessa Bell-Lasota asked if Rt. 31 had been studied all the way to the Red Gate Bridge. Mr. Lavigne said it will not be very specific, but the area will be addressed in the land use plan with a designation land at that intersection. Mr. Smunt said there was a workshop for that area at one time and he doesn't remember any recommendations for commercial development along Rt. 31 north of the railroad. Ms. Bell-Lasota said the area should be addressed and referenced a past study related to the bridge. Chairman Armstrong explained the community's vision for that area will be in the land-use plan.

Mr. Anderson mentioned the First St. PUD plan, Building #10 on Main St., is visually confining from the bridge. Chairman Armstrong said it is like that because it is the PUD that is already approved. Mr. Anderson suggested the corner being opened up. Mr. Rabchuk said to just call it a catalyst site from Main St. to Illinois St. because none of the buildings shown will be built.

b. West Gateway

Mr. Lavigne said regarding the former St. Charles Mall site, there was a consensus to make revisions to have a "no residential" option and to then change "mixed use" to "office/retail/service" on the plans. Ms. Penny said she likes the idea of the flexibility. Mr. Bessner agreed on leaving the residential open.

Dave Patzelt, Shodeen Inc., said he doesn't feel that the three plans are consistent with where the Plan Commission's recommendation was on the Towne Centre development proposal. He said the plan leads you to believe only townhomes are allowed, instead of possible mixed use with residential above retail. He said he feels it's the most critical site and that he agrees with the consideration to alter Randall Rd. and Lincoln Highway with a variety of uses to meet market trends, but that he doesn't feel the plans show what the market trends are. He said if there is something not wanted there as a use then it should be stated, but that in saying that, he does not mean the number of units. He said in regard to parking decks, he doesn't see anything and asked if they would be permitted and he feels that should be addressed. He said in regard to Jewel being relocated on the site, that it will never happen, they are a very successful store and would never do that and he feels the plans are off for improving the site, transportation, and changing the character along the Randall Rd. corridor. Chairman Armstrong said the three different alternatives show not just one solution but a variety and a framework to do that. Mr. Patzelt said he likes the three alternatives but feels that something should be taken from all three and put together. Chairman Armstrong said he agrees and that developers like clarity. Mr. Patzelt said he doesn't see in any of the plans where a residential use could be above commercial/retail and he feels that for clarity the words "no residential" should be included.

Chairman Armstrong mentioned that the west side Jewel store is a small store and packed and even though they are doing well that maybe they would like a bigger store. Mr. Patzelt said that during the Towne Centre discussions Shodeen had asked Jewel to agree to open up access and it was difficult.

Ms. Penny said in regard to the Plan Commission's recommendations that they didn't include the whole other side of Rt. 38. Mr. Patzelt said that is correct and he does agree that something needs to be done to the south side.

Mr. Lavigne said in regard to the residential above retail, that he feels that the Task Force may have over reacted in taking the term "mixed-use" out of the plans. Mr. Rabchuk said he agrees and feels there should be one that shows a combination of commercial, residential and retail.

Chairman Armstrong suggested maybe pulling the words “Town Center commercial” off because it may be sending a mixed signal. Mr. Lavigne said “office/retail/service” becomes “mixed-use” on the third option and that for it to be successful it would almost require a parking garage. Mr. Bessner said he thought that at the last meeting it was even discussed as far as parameters and how many units so he was puzzled and said he just doesn’t want to handcuff the city.

Chairman Armstrong asked if the residential would be defined by acreage for density as a range. Mr. Lavigne said it will be, but not as specific as the zoning. Chairman Armstrong said the more density, the more trade-offs the city will expect on other features. Mr. Lavigne said this site in the land use plan may not have a definitive land use and may just be a “maintain flexibility” type of designation.

Mr. Gaugel said in regard to the parking for this site that it shouldn’t be any different than it’s listed for the downtown area. He said he thinks it should say any development needs to take into account adequate parking and to not get too specific.

Curt Henningson, Plan Commission and Housing Commission member, said he envisions maximum flexibility for the site including retail, office, entertainment, hotel and also multi-family residential. He said the way it is listed right now leads him to believe the site is only available for townhomes. Chairman Armstrong said the slash between multi-family and townhomes means either or. He said he does agree that there should be flexibility but that it also needs to say what we mean and that could be the biggest downfall of offering maximum flexibility. Mr. Smunt said by using the word “townhouse” it’s almost like saying apartments are a problem, which is a major issue for the residents adjacent to the site, and true or not he said he feels that in not using the word “apartment” its implying that ownership needs to be there. Mr. Glenn noted townhomes can be condo ownership in some situations. Mr. Henningson said he suggests multi-family residential is preferred because it covers all categories with the exception of single-family. Chairman Armstrong said as long as the text statement clarifies he doesn’t have a preference of what term to use.

Mr. Bell-Lasota said since the Comprehensive Plan cannot prevent anything, she has a hard time with the process and all the discussion and input from the community, when the doors could still be open to the very things that the neighbors are appealing. She said moving the Jewel is a pipedream and it should be left alone and that currently Randall Rd. and Prairie is a major crash site and that there should be a concern with density for the site because it will make that intersection even more unsafe. She said it is very difficult for the apartment people to connect with the community and for the community to connect with them.

Mr. Glenn commented that he thinks the Glen in Glenview is an excellent development and he would like to see more like it, and also that Jewel is in the way and needs to be moved.

An audience member asked if the West Gateway included Rt. 64 and referenced the Corporate Reserve site. Chairman Armstrong said Rt. 64 is more the Main St. Corridor Plan and will probably be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Rabchuk said he agrees with Mr. Henningson that there does need to be flexibility but that the Comprehensive Plan should still reflect that any form of multi-family housing or whatever terminology is most encompassing to not imply that something is excluded at this time. Mr. Lavigne said maybe to use “moderate/high density” meaning exactly how it sounds. Chairman Armstrong said “high density” means different things to different people. Mr. Lavigne said but

its moderate density and he feels the wording is fine. Chairman Armstrong said eventually a number will need to be called out because to say high or medium density is not a helpful adjective and is very open ended. He said it needs to be clear and a range should be used, and it needs to be said why a higher or lower density would be considered and he personally likes the way it is worded right now. Mr. Lavigne suggested beefing up the legends a little to describe the uses better.

Mr. Smunt asked what “mixed use” entails. Mr. Lavigne said commercial on the ground floor and either more commercial activity or multifamily above.

Ms. Bell-Lasota asked if multi-family is set in stone. Chairman Armstrong said he is not sure but whatever is said it needs to be clearly defined and then explained that for it to be set in stone there will be more Task Force meetings to review the draft of the plan, then a recommendation will be made by the Task Force followed by an open house, then it will go to Plan Commission and a public hearing, and lastly adopted by Council.

Ms. Bell-Lasota asked if by record of this meeting if all discussed will be set in place. Chairman Armstrong said there have been major revisions to plans in the past, even whole chapters removed, and that he understands her concern with the mixed use but that it is by far from a done deal. Mr. Lavigne explained that they accurately represent what was heard and that they don't accept the totality of the changes until they are seen. He said even after the plan is adopted it is still up for change. Ms. Penny said things will always be changing based on the economy.

Ms. Bell-Lasota asked about working on the range for describing the types of density. Mr. Lavigne said he would like to take a shot of describing the types of units rather than density. Chairman Armstrong said it would have to be describing structural types since ownership is not something the city has the authority to regulate, but that there are certain types more conducive to ownership than to rental. He said the Task Force is not at an agreement yet but will get there.

Ms. Penny asked about the desire for rentals with retail or commercial or whole units of rental. Mr. Patzelt said he is not thinking in terms of rental or owner occupied. He said he doesn't feel it's a good site for townhomes, they would be out of place, but maybe stacked flats with underground parking. Ms. Penny said her feeling is the real objection is a large unit where the whole complex is rentals, but that something like what is above Harris Bank on First St., around 8 units or so, is not a problem. Ms. Bell-Lasota agreed. Ms. Penny said she is not one way or the other against anything but that she does not want to lock this site to where no one wants to come and develop anything. She said the reality is that there are politicians that have to say yes or no. Mr. Rabchuk said this plan has expanded the site which may have changed the scope some and there could be a possibility of things south of Rt. 38 that are not against the high density residential that would work well, but there needs to be residential somewhere to support the retail.

c. East Gateway

Mr. Lavigne said nothing too substantial was heard at the open house. He said stormwater need to be shown and some 3D visualizations added, with an illustration keeping the anchors in place. He said green field developments need to be discussed but that there are infinite possibilities. Mr. Rabchuk said he leans toward Option C because it keeps Carson's intact. He has heard that moving Foxfield Dr. to open obvious outlots for development is a terrific idea to get things moving. Mr. Lavigne said at the open house there was a concern with more multi-family. Mr. Gaugel said he agrees with Mr. Rabchuk and he likes the first plan presented but also the third

plan but Carson's needs to be included there. Mr. Lavigne suggested shifting the traffic circle to the east. Mr. Rabchuk agreed and stated that as far as the mall no one is really certain if it can even structurally be taken apart yet.

Mr. Anderson mentioned the street/trail connection along the railroad right of way from Main Street to the east. Chairman Armstrong said there is a trail access crossing by Cedar Crossing and to the south there is a proposed cross access street to Kirk Rd. Mr. Colby said the Tyler to Kirk segment was taken out because of redundancy. Mr. Rabchuk said there is a 100 ft. right of way which is more than enough for a road and a bike trail, which is a better use than an abandoned railroad. Chairman Armstrong said it will come to the south of Main St. and tie into that. Mr. Lavigne said there will be more clarity on the Transportation Plan.

Ms. Bell-Lasota said that there was discussion at workshops about senior community centers being developed and asked why it is not reflected in the plans. Chairman Armstrong said a text statement could be in for that stating a senior center and a walk appropriate for seniors. Ms. Bell-Lasota said a senior center would help traffic flows and also support retail.

Mr. Glenn said in regard to the three scenarios for the mall, that the ponds with the mix of the single-family and townhomes are currently where trees and berms are located. Mr. Lavigne said one thing that still needs to be done is to decide how to displace all the detention because it will still need to be replaced. Mr. Glenn also stated that the dozen single-family homes in the plan would be against existing single-family home and he feels it would be very piece meal and hard to sell the second time around. He suggested doing that area as really high quality townhomes or apartments. He said the 3 layouts are hard to read and there is a whole lot of land area.

Mr. Gaugel said that the recommendation for the single family or townhomes is not exactly the way the Task Force wants it but just a suggestion. Mr. Smunt said not specific with rentals either.

4. Finalize Vision, Goals, Objectives-

This item was postponed and will be put on the Agenda for October 30, 2012.

5. Meeting Announcements and Project Schedule:

- a. Task Force Meeting, Tuesday, October 30, 2012 at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers
- b. Task Force Meeting, Wednesday, November 14, 2012 at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers
- c. Open House for Plan Draft: Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 6:00pm to 7:30 pm in the Council Chambers

6. Additional Business

Mr. Colby noted the Task Force had received handouts on Boundary Agreements, Development Parcels, and the City's Utility and Stormwater systems to review for the next meeting on Oct. 30.

7. Adjournment at 9:05pm.