

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2013
COUNCIL COMMITTEE ROOM**

Members Present: Chairman Smunt, Bobowiec, Malay, Norris, Pretz, Withey

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager

1. Call to order:

Chairman Smunt called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll call:

Chairman Smunt called roll with six members present. There was a quorum.

3. Approval of the agenda:

No changes or additions.

4. Presentation of minutes from November 20, 2013 meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Bobowiec and seconded by Mr. Withey with a unanimous voice vote to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Pretz abstained.

5. COA: 200 W. Main St. (sign)

Brice Soltys, applicant, was present. He described the proposed sign, which will be a black or anodized brown color, with silver lettering, and no lighting is proposed.

A motion was made by Mr. Withey and seconded by Ms. Malay with a unanimous voice vote to approve the COA.

6. Concept Plan Review: Foxwood Square PUD/Raymond Judd House (309 S. 6th Ave.)

Gary and Michael Ciampi, Michael Vincent Homes, representatives of SGC Builders Inc., applicant, were present. Michael Ciampi presented information on the proposal. He stated that the original plan was for five duplex pads for 10 additional units, each around 3,000 square feet. Two units were sold and the remainder of the property was foreclosed. Their proposal is to amend the PUD to allow for smaller 1,800 square foot units, with 3 townhome units on some of

the duplex building pads, which would be around the same footprint size as the duplexes. He referenced the concept elevations which were submitted. He said they would like to continue developing the property, but they are concerned about the mansion building. He said the mansion building had been planned for two units, but currently it does not have the infrastructure for this, and the costs could total \$400,000 to \$500,000. He said the placement of the house does not allow for a good overall development plan, as the planned townhome units were sandwiched around the house. He said it would be difficult to match the original architecture of the mansion in the new townhomes, as this would increase the cost beyond what is sellable. Therefore, they are asking the Commission to consider allowing the removal of the mansion building and allowing new development to compliment what is going on around the site. Gary Ciampi referenced the Heritage Square development, immediately to the north as an example.

Chairman Smunt asked the Commission members if they had questions for the applicant.

Mr. Bobowiec said asking the Commission to consider demolition of the building is a significant request, but he acknowledged the building does need work. Mr. Withey agreed that the building is not in great shape.

Chairman Smunt said there needs to be an objective independent building inspection by a party not affiliated with the applicant or the City for the Commission to consider before entertaining the idea of allowing the building to be demolished. He said another alternative to consider is moving the building from the center of the site to a location closer to 6th Ave. In this scenario, moving the building is the developer's cost and the buyer would be responsible for restoring the building.

Ms. Malay agreed the Commission needs to know if saving the building is a viable option. She said the architecture of the project needs to be a gem that will benefit the neighborhood. She would prefer brick and more classic features vs. what is proposed. She added that in her discussions with ward Ald. Krieger, density is a significant concern and that the neighbors were opposed to the density of the project as it was approved. Regarding the landmark designation, she suggested the landmark status remain on the property until the construction was complete. She asked Mr. Colby to explain what they had discussed regarding the landmark status.

Mr. Colby stated that the property is a designated landmark, but not in the Historic District. He said if the City Council approves amending the PUD to allow the building to be demolished, the original landmark designation findings would no longer be valid. Therefore, the City could recommend the developer apply to have the landmark designation removed at the same time the project is up for approval. The Historic Commission would hold a public hearing and make a recommendation on removing the landmark designation. If the landmark designation was

removed, the Commission would still review PUD plans for the site, since it is located within 250 ft. of the Historic District. Chairman Smunt added that another option would be to add the property to the Historic District.

Ms. Malay stated her concern is that the mansion building stays up as long as it can so that it isn't demolished for a stalled development project. Mr. Withey stated that it would be a construction issue to try to work around the mansion building.

Mr. Pretz asked if the developer had communicated with the current residents of the existing townhomes. Michael Ciampi responded no. Mr. Pretz said architecturally, he doesn't see the connection between the proposed townhomes and the mansion building. He referenced the Pure Oil building situation in Geneva, where there was a groundswell of support to save the building, so he suggested the developer needs to have a Plan B ready if the demolition is not approved.

Chairman Smunt said he is hearing that the Commission wants to see the building saved, and the developer needs to investigate every option for it being saved before any decision is made. Ms. Malay recalled the building was originally landmarked by a past owner who was near death and wanted to be sure the building was preserved.

Ald. Lemke, who stated he was speaking as a resident, said he was involved in Historic Preservation discussions dating back to the Farnsworth Mansion and referenced the importance of historic landmarks to the City. He recalled being involved with the preservation of the Judd Mansion back when the building was to be converted to a church. He recalled that community members pitched in and were able to accomplish significant repairs, including adding structural steel to help stabilize the building, without incurring a significant cost. It was noted that Robin Mahaffey had done the original architectural drawings for the planned church addition to the west.

Liz Safanda, Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, said her organization is based in St. Charles and their board, which represents the Fox Valley area, is very concerned about the fate of this iconic structure. She believes a significant component of the community will be concerned about and will follow what happens to this building. She referenced the situation with the Pure Oil building in Geneva, where the preservation of the building turned out to be a win-win for the owner and the community.

Ms. Malay referenced the Heritage Square project across Indiana Ave. to the north, where significant buildings were salvaged along with new buildings constructed, and this was very successful. Gary Ciampi agreed but noted the Judd Mansion's size and location are more

difficult to work around. He said the project didn't have a good site plan to begin with, and the units didn't sell well, and he is not interested in taking on a project that won't sell.

Ms. Malay also referenced the old Piano Factory and the Brownstone development, where the later buildings were not as high quality as the first building, which detracts from the project. She said she believes that if a landmark is to be torn down, then what replaces it needs to be comparable in quality. She suggested also considering other types of units, such as row houses.

Mr. Withey stated the Commission needs facts before considering the project further, including an objective opinion on whether the structure can be moved.

Ald. Lemke added that parking is an issue with this site and therefore there may be pushback on adding additional units.

Laura Rice, resident, stated that she moved to St. Charles because of the charm of the community, including the mix of different types and ages of buildings. She is concerned about the precedent that would be set by allowing this landmark to be demolished. She believes it will undermine the landmark process. She suggested the developer partner with someone who wants to preserve the building as a single family home. She said in reality the building looks worse than it really is, as a lot of damage has been caused by a lack of temperature and humidity control in the building over the past few years.

Gary Ciampi noted that there are many issues to be dealt with in considering a renovation of the house, including EPA rules dealing with lead paint.

Dan Marshall, architect, stated that no developer is willing to purchase this property until there is a viable development project, and he thinks the Commission has the right attitude about how to approach the proposal. He noted that the property has been bank owned for some time.

Mr. Pretz stated he recognizes that everyone is better off having something done at the site.

Chairman Smunt asked if the developers would still be interested in the site if the building were moved off of the center of the block. Michael Ciampi said possibly; Gary Ciampi said they have not considered that an option for what they would like to do.

Chairman Smunt noted the site is a PUD, so setbacks can be varied, and perhaps the front porch and port cochere could be removed. Mr. Withey recalled that the brick or stone may have been added as a later addition to the building. Ms. Safanda said she has seen brochures advertising St. Charles from the 1920s that show the building with its current exterior. Chairman Smunt said

there hasn't been any conclusive evidence from an inspection to provide information on the building's construction.

7. Concept Plan Review: First Street Redevelopment PUD, Phase 3 (northeast corner of S. 1st St. & Illinois St.)

Bob Rasmussen, representing First Street Development, LLC, applicant, was present. He said similar to the last project, First Street Phase 3 has been sitting dormant for the past six years, due to the economy and there no longer being a market for the residential units that were planned. He noted they were lucky they didn't construct anything on the site, as the project would have failed. He said there is now a new opportunity for the project with the economy improving. The new proposal is for three mixed use buildings, with rental apartments in buildings 1 and 2 along First Street and condominiums in building 3 along the river. He said overall the project is at about 70 to 72% of the original project square footage and the building height is down about 20 ft. He said the reduced height will minimize the cavernous effect along First St., which was a past concern. He said the buildings are within the original footprints of the buildings planned for the site. He said the condo building would be financed by an outside company that will be able to offer financing to buyers. For the parking deck, the first floor will be slightly below street level and the second floor will be about 8 ft. high, which will not obstruct residential units on the second floor of the buildings. Commercial uses are planned on the first floor of all of the buildings. He referenced the architectural rendering, which shows an old factory look with sections of EIFS. He noted the buildings need to stay within a certain square footage due to construction costs. Dan Marshall, architect for the building, noted the City wanted the buildings to be larger to help balance out the TIF revenue, so a fifth floor was added to building 3.

Mr. Pretz and Ms. Malay asked about the riverwalk. Mr. Rasmussen said there are no changes to the size of the planned riverwalk. He said outdoor dining that had been planned along the riverwalk will now be located on private property, which will further open up the walkway. Mr. Bobowiec asked how they would handle river bugs in the outdoor dining. Mr. Rasmussen said they weren't a problem last year, but other businesses deal with the issue.

Chairman Smunt noted a planning goal in the downtown has been to keep parking away from the river and not have cars be visible. Mr. Rasmussen stated that from off site, only the second level would be visible, and on the visible portions they would use brick and windows on the façade to hide the cars. Mr. Bobowiec asked how this parking deck would be screened from the outdoor dining and how would noise be dealt with. Mr. Rasmussen said landscaping would be used also. Chairman Smunt noted this is a similar arrangement to what exists at The Office.

Chairman Smunt said he has no issue with the building height. However, he said his reaction to the elevation is that this building could be located anywhere in a modern, contemporary

downtown. He asked what could be done to make this building design unique. He recalled the original design to create a look similar to an urban loft environment. He said what is proposed looks more like an apartment complex.

Mr. Rasmussen said they can consider removing the bays and EIFS and doing more of an old warehouse look, which is less suburban in appearance. Ms. Malay referenced the One West Main building design as an example. Chairman Smunt and Mr. Bobowiec referenced the red brick rowhome development in downtown Elgin, which uses all brick with some variation.

Mr. Pretz asked how much influence the outside company would have on the architecture. Mr. Rasmussen said they would have no influence on the apartments. Mr. Pretz asked if the apartments could eventually be converted to condos. Mr. Rasmussen said his goal is to own the apartments long term.

7. Additional Business

The Commission discussed the Jones Law Office building at the Dunham Hunt house site, 304 Cedar Ave. Chairman Smunt said Laura Rudow of the Park District was going to present the information to the Park Board last Tuesday night. She thought that of all of the Park District properties, Primrose Farm would make the most sense in terms of programming. He said Ms. Rudow wasn't interested in considering the Baker Park location. Ms. Malay said her Park Foundation Board meeting was cancelled, so she hasn't had a chance to discuss this topic with them. Chairman Smunt noted the Heritage Center isn't interested in the building. He mentioned the City is in the planning stages of a Municipal Center parking lot redesign, with increased riverfront greenspace that could be a potential location. Mr. Colby will check on the status of this project.

Ms. Safanda said she would prefer the building not be moved out of the downtown area. She mentioned the idea of forming a group of local attorneys to contribute to the relocation or restoration of the structure. Chairman Smunt said he talked to some local attorneys who expressed interest.

Ms. Malay said safety and maintenance of the building could be an issue at Baker Park. The Commission discussed that the Municipal Center location wouldn't provide a use or function for the building. Ms. Safanda referenced a similar building located at the Depot Museum in Batavia.

Ms. Safanda said the Law Office building may not fit the mission of Primrose Farm, which is meant to focus on a specific time frame of a farm in the 1930s. Chairman Smunt noted that some of the farm buildings are much older.

Ms. Safanda said that regardless, the building is very interesting in relation to early downtown history. She said she would be interesting in serving on a brainstorming committee regarding the building and she believes Preservation Partners could assist in fundraising.

Chairman Smunt asked Mr. Colby to determine the status of the Municipal Center parking lot/riverfront project to see if this could be a viable location. Mr. Colby said he will confer with other staff on the issue and follow up with the Commission at the next meeting.

8. Announcements: Historic Preservation Commission meeting Wednesday, January 8, 2014 at 7:00pm in the Committee Room.

Chairman Smunt noted the next regular meeting would fall on Jan. 1, a holiday. The January meetings will instead be moved one week later, to Jan. 8 and Jan. 22, which will work because it is a five Wednesday month. The meetings will then return to the normal schedule in February.

Ms. Rice brought up the Foxwood Square project and indicated that she is personally interested in purchasing the Judd House but has not had success communicating with the bank regarding the property. The Commission suggested she reach out directly to the bank.

9. Adjournment:

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.