

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
PLAN COMMISSION
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2015**

Members Present: Chairman Todd Wallace
Tom Pretz
Brian Doyle
Michelle Spruth
James Holderfield
Laura Macklin-Purdy

Members Absent: Tom Schuetz
Dan Frio
Tim Kessler

Also Present: Russell Colby, Planning Division Manager
Chris Bong, Development Engineering Division Manager

1. Call to order

Chairman Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Chairman Wallace called the roll. A quorum was present.

3. Presentation of minutes of the November 9, 2015 joint meeting of the Plan Commission and Planning & Development Committee.

Motion was made by Mr. Holderfield, seconded by Mr. Doyle, and unanimously passed by voice vote to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2015 joint meeting of the Plan Commission and Planning & Development Committee meeting.

4. Presentation of minutes of the November 9, 2015 meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Doyle, seconded by Mr. Holderfield, and unanimously passed by voice vote to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2015 meeting.

5. First Street Redevelopment PUD- Phase 3 (City of St. Charles)

Preliminary Plan for Streetscape Improvements for First and Illinois Streets

Mr. Colby said the commission reviewed the plan for the development of Phase 3, with 3 proposed mixed use buildings and parking deck, which was approved by the city earlier this year. He said one of the conditions placed on the approval was that each of the public spaces in the development need to be updated from the 2006 plan to reflect the changes to the phase 3 plan approved earlier this year. He then presented the proposed changes and gave a brief background as to how staff had come up

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with the plan being presented that evening. He clarified that there is no specific application on file; it was just a condition of the previous PUD preliminary plan approval that this plan be presented to Plan Commission for a recommendation.

Mr. Colby said in 2008 there was a streetscape plan that was developed over the entire project that looked at each of the public open spaces: West Plaza-which has been constructed, East Plaza-which will mirror the west side, and the Riverwalk-which is along the riverfront adjacent to the phase 3 property. He said there was a whole design theme selected for the streetscape materials and all of those were specified in the original plan: types of paver bricks, light fixtures and street furniture, and those are the materials that were installed in the portions completed to date.

Mr. Colby showed an aerial photo of the entire project from 2014 to show which buildings were part of the initial development; the way the project was phased was not a situation where all of the initial buildings were constructed in one area. He said there were a few buildings that had to be constructed first and they are separated out, so there are different portions of streetscape that have been completed adjacent to the new buildings and there are stretches where there are no streetscape improvements; right now it's kind of choppy, there doesn't seem to be a consistent flow because it hasn't been completed. He said the area being discussed tonight is the phase 3 portion and the focus of the streetscape plans is the frontage of the buildings along First St. and then along Illinois St.

Mr. Colby said phases 1 and 2 were completed in 2007 and 2009, with streetscape installed along both streets, and the West Plaza was completed. Earlier this year, a new plan for phase 3 was approved by the city that would require modification to the previously approved streetscape plan, and then a revised plan for the East Plaza and Riverwalk, but those elements will come later once they are designed. He said those elements are not expected to be designed until the 3rd building of the phase 3 project has been designed and approved because the city is trying to be sensitive to designing the streetscape and the public spaces to accurately follow where the buildings have been planned. He then showed the phase 3 site plan which showed each of the 3 buildings and the parking deck; building #1 is under construction right now and the excavation work is ongoing for the parking deck which is to be constructed behind it, and both are expected to be completed next year. He said construction for building #2 will start next year in either the spring or summer; so as each of these buildings are completed the streetscaping improvements will be installed right afterward or slightly before the buildings are starting to be occupied.

Mr. Colby showed a perspective drawing which showed each of the buildings and the parking decks layout and noted that there is no known use for the site at the corner of First St. and Main St. He said these drawings give an idea of what the city is working with in terms of trying to design around the buildings; building 2 has the upper level residential and the building has a lot of articulation with a number of bumpouts, overhangs and balconies over the entire length of the façade and quite a bit of the building is sticking out over the sidewalk area; so that is one element they are needing to design around. He said looking north from Illinois St. is building #1 that has upper level office, which has a different appearance along the streetscape with a large overhang on the corner, but continuing north on First St. the building is flat and each of the storefronts that open up to First St.

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have recessed doorways; so there is more space to work with in front of that building versus building #2 which has a different street presence.

Mr. Colby said as part of the process in developing this plan staff looked at the 2008 approved plan to see how it functions now that it is built and they found that the materials used are attractive and well received by the community; but there have been some shortcomings identified with how it was laid out; in particular it doesn't respond well to how the buildings are shaped in terms of where the doors are and elements of the buildings that stick out over the street. He said also the design that was chosen really limited the functionality of the pedestrian zone of the sidewalk in that it is fairly narrow passage ways through most of the stretch of First St.; in particular directly across from the area in discussion.

Mr. Colby then showed some photos demonstrating those shortcomings:

- Planter boxes were spaced apart in a set pattern, and as a result, some boxes were placed directly in front of storefront entrances.
- Trees within some planter boxes ended up being removed or badly pruned to improve business visibility.
- Balconies - Plans did not account for balconies and upper story building projections. Specifically, at the BMO Harris building, trees have grown up into the balconies. Trees grow quickly and conflict with building projections, giving the street a crowded, over grown appearance. The trees then require significant pruning, which leads to a misshapen tree.
- Sidewalk Width-Landscape planter boxes placed within the sidewalk area can create choke points at certain locations, leaving tight spaces for pedestrians trying pass on the sidewalk.
- Usable Sidewalk Area-Including landscape planter boxes along the entire length of the sidewalk area limits the use of sidewalks by people and businesses; the west side of First St. has provided only limited opportunity for outdoor seating, displays, or activities.
- Tree Density - Too many trees can hide building architecture; as trees mature, they create a dark tunnel effect, which conflicts with the desired character of an open, urban street environment. He said as a result of having a lot of trees; in particular the ones with irrigation are growing fast and robust, and there are a couple of sections where there are more trees than should have been planted in close proximity.

Mr. Colby said the approach with the phase 3 plan is to try and account for those issues and come up with a plan that still fits the theme of the original design for the entire development by utilizing the same materials which include the same brick materials and same design with an edge ribbon; pedestrian street lamps; benches and garbage cans; and tree grates. He described the new plan:

- Streetscape is designed around all building entrances, storefront locations, and anticipated door swings (where storefronts are not recessed into the buildings).

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- Maximized usable sidewalk width:
 - Generally, keeping 10+ ft. open in front of buildings (Only narrowing down to 8 ft. along Illinois St., where there are no storefront entrances)
 - For comparison, the width of the pedestrian zone in many locations on the west side of First Street ranges from 5.5 to 6.5 feet (from building face to planter box)
- Limit planter areas to building corners, where they will not conflict with the usable sidewalk area.
 - Create more substantial planting areas in less usable locations, instead of many smaller planter boxes.
- Space out trees, don't plant in sidewalk areas around balconies
 - No trees will be placed within the sidewalk immediately adjacent to Building #2, which will have balconies along the entire First St. façade.
 - Shade trees have been placed in larger planter beds at the ends of the buildings where they will have room to grow larger.
 - Columnar trees have been placed at other locations, but spaced so as not to block direct views of storefronts or signs.
- Streetscape has been designed in tandem with on-street utility routes to minimize conflicts.

Mr. Colby then walked through the plan for building #1 starting on the Illinois St. side:

- Parking deck entrance at grade level.
- Sidewalk 8 ft. wide and will extend down the face of the building with a continuous planter bed along Illinois due to a grade change between the sidewalk and the street.
- Large overhand off of the building; they tried to keep the streetscape elements, both the landscaping and the light poles, out of the way to not overcrowd the area.
- Grade change with a step down to the intersection of First and Illinois St.
- Split staircase because of the grade change.
- Large planting bed as you round the corner.
- Ramp to come from the sidewalk level to the intersection grade.
- Tried to leave areas for outdoor dining.
- Frontage has no planter beds within the main sidewalk zone.
- Couple of tree grates
- Landscaping in the bump out at the entrance to the 2nd level of the parking deck.
- Pedestrian walk up the ramp to 2nd level of parking deck.

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- Stairs from the lower level of the parking deck out to the street.

Building #2:

- Full intersection of 2nd floor parking deck ramp to the street.
- Landscape planters on both sides at the entrance.
- Maintained the 10 ft. wide sidewalk corridor-certain locations it does narrow down due to bump outs of the building.
- Balconies over the entire frontage-keeping area free of any obstruction other than the light poles.
- In lieu of one of the planned on-street parking spaces, they added a landscape island to place a shade tree within the stretch in a location that will not directly conflict with elements of the building that hang out over the street.
- Landscape island to at the East Plaza area.

Building #3 streetscaping on Illinois St. will be designed with building #3 because no one is sure how that area will be utilized and it's directly connected to the Riverwalk, and without the Riverwalk designed it doesn't make sense to design that section of the streetscape yet.

Mr. Doyle asked if there would be parallel parking on the north side of the building near the plaza. Mr. Colby said immediately north of building #2 there is currently a temporary parking lot but that will go away and the area directly adjacent to building #2 will all be an extension of the plaza to the east; which then connects to the stairwell that would go down to the lower level of the Riverwalk. He said that area is walled off right now on the riverfront; but it will be filled in to be a pedestrian area once the improvements are completed; so there will be no additional angled or parallel parking to the north. Mr. Doyle said he was trying to understand why there are wider areas between the bump outs near where the plazas are; he asked if the idea is that the plaza itself is a crosswalk. Mr. Colby said yes, and it's actually like a loading zone; businesses use it and also valet services; its meant to be an area where you can slow down and pull off the road; but yes it more or less functions as a crosswalk.

Mr. Doyle asked about the continuous planter along Illinois St. and wondered if the small area where it curves needed to be there due to the staircase. Mr. Colby said he thinks it curves in so that they can adequately accommodate the correct number of stairs with the correct stair height. Mr. Bong said that's correct; the way the grades worked out it had to curve in a bit, but he thinks it's not quite as narrow as it looks due to the overhang being shown on the drawing. Mr. Colby said the white area is the actual building face; so everything is open underneath the overhang.

Motion was made by Mr. Doyle, seconded by Mr. Pretz, to recommend approval of First Street Redevelopment PUD-Phase 3, Preliminary Plan for Streetscape Improvements for First and Illinois Streets.

Roll Call Vote:

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Ayes: Wallace, Pretz, Doyle, Spruth, Macklin-Purdy Holderfield

Nays:

Absent: Schuetz, Frio, Kessler

Motion carried: 6-0

6. Additional Business from Plan Commission Members or Staff-None.

7. Weekly Development Report – Mr. Colby noted that staff plans to schedule the Prairie Center concept plan application for the January 5, 2016 meeting, and it would then go to P&D Committee on January 11, 2016. He said it's not listed as scheduled yet because the notices have not been sent yet; but once that happens it will be listed, and staff anticipates that will be the only item on that agenda. Chairman Wallace asked if they would meet in the Council Chamber and wondered if staff heard anything in regard to what the turnout would be. Mr. Colby said they would meet in the Chamber and he expects it to be well attended.

8. Meeting Announcements

a. Plan Commission

Tuesday, December 22, 2015 at 7:00pm Council Chambers – **Cancelled**

Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at 7:00pm Council Chambers

Tuesday, January 19, 2016 at 7:00pm Century Station Training Room

b. Planning & Development Committee

Monday, December 14, 2015 at 7:00pm Council Chambers

Monday, January 11, 2016 at 7:00pm Council Chambers

9. Public Comment-None.

10. Adjournment at 7:31PM