MEETING MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, February 12, 2014
7:00 P.M.
Evanston Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, Council Chambers

Members Present: Scott Peters (Chair), Terri Dubin, Jim Ford, Seth Freeman, Lenny Asaro, Colby Lewis, Richard Shure, Kwesi Steele,

Associate Members Present: Stuart Opdycke, David Galloway

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Mark Muenzer, Director of Community Development
Melissa Klotz, Interim Zoning Administrator
Damir Latinovic, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Mario Treto, Assistant City Attorney I

Others Present: Melissa A. Wynne, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Ward Alderman

Presiding Member: Scott Peters, Chairman

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Peters called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M and explained the general meeting procedure, schedule, agenda items, time limits on public testimony and opportunities for cross examination of witnesses. Chairman Peters concluded the opening statement by saying that the Plan Commission forwards a recommendation to the City Council which makes the final determination on any matters discussed by the Plan Commission.

2. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 8, 2014 MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Freeman made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Ford.

A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved by voice call 8-0.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. PLANED DEVELOPMENT 13PLND-0114
835 Chicago Avenue
John O’Donnell of O’Donnell Investment Co., developer of the proposed project, applies for a Special Use for a Planned Development in the C1a Commercial Mixed Use District (Zoning Code Section 6-10-3-3) to construct a 9-story, 97’ tall mixed-use commercial, office, and residential tower. The
the proposed tower consists of 112 dwelling units, approximately 15,670 gross square feet of office space, approximately 12,064 gross square feet of commercial retail space, and 104 enclosed parking spaces. The applicant seeks Site Development Allowances for the number of dwelling units per lot size, floor area ratio (FAR), building height, enclosed parking setback, number of parking spaces, and the number and length of loading berths. The Plan Commission makes a recommendation to City Council, the final determining body for this proposal.

Melissa Klotz, Interim Zoning Administrator, read the case into the record and presented the staff report. She concluded by saying staff recommends approval of the proposed planned development at 835 Chicago Avenue.

Chairman Peters swore in all individuals that will be providing testimony during tonight’s meeting.

Patrick Thompson, the attorney for the developer, introduced the developer’s team and witnesses that will be providing testimony. He pointed to the handouts that were provided to the Plan Commission before the meeting as Exhibits 1, 2 and 3. Exhibit 1 being the resume and qualification of project architect Donald Cooper with GREC Architects, Exhibit 2, the resume and qualifications of real estate appraiser Michael A. Wolin, MAI, SRA with Price appraisal, Inc., and Exhibit 3, the resume and qualifications of Luay R. Aboona, principal with Kenig, Lindgren, O’Hara, Aboona, Inc. (KLOA) parking and traffic engineering consultant.

Mr. Thompson, summarized the project and stated they are requesting special use approval for a planned development. Mr. Thompson introduced the first witness: Donald Cooper.

Donald Cooper, principal GREC architects, provided the summary of the architectural design for the building. The proposed building is a nine-stories mixed use commercial and multi-family development located on the vacant land at the southeast corner of Chicago Ave and Main Street. The first floor would include retail space and tenant lobby, the second floor would house state-of-the art office space and building amenities to be shared with building residents including the outdoor green space at the northwest corner of the building. The floors 3-9 will consist of a total of 112 residential units, including 14 studios, 49 one-bedroom units, 42 two-bedroom units and seven three bedroom units. The building will achieve LEED Silver status and use highest quality building materials to create an appearance that will complement surrounding neighborhood and building stock. The building’s zip-car and bike storage facilities and its location next to CTA and Metra stations will promote Transit-Oriented Development.

Upon a question by Mr. Thompson, Mr. Cooper confirmed he is familiar with zoning requirements and thresholds for commercial and planned developments. Mr. Cooper also confirmed that the project meets at least one threshold as a requirement to only be approved as a Planned Development. Mr. Cooper confirmed the subject lot is 30,500 sq. ft. The development will also include 112 units exceeding the threshold of at least 24 units of either combination of commercial, office or residential units. The proposed development exceeds the 20,000 sq. ft. threshold and will have a 28,664 sq. ft. of gross floor area of office and retail area.
Mr. Thompson invited the next witness Michael A. Wolin.

Michael, A. Wolin, provided a summary of his experience as a professional real estate appraiser. Mr. Wolin stated he is familiar with the proposed site. The property has been vacant since the previous two-story building on the site was demolished circa 2007. In 2010 the applicant acquired the property. The project will capitalize on the proximity to transit stops and revitalize a blighted site. The project will contribute approximately $16 mil. to the Chicago/Main TIF over the life of the TIF. The project will contribute to the vitality of this and neighboring properties, and it will not impede the development of surrounding properties for permitted uses.

Upon a question from Mr. Thompson, Mr. Wolin stated the project will not have a negative effect on surrounding uses. It is his belief, that the proposed project is viable and desirable use for the subject property. Similar mixed-use buildings are located at the northeast and northwest corners of the intersection. Upon a question, Mr. Wolin stated the development will not diminish the property values in the neighborhood. The urban infill project will remedy a long-standing blighted property and should increase the property values by creating additional economic vitality in the area. The project will not endanger public health, safety, morals and welfare in the surrounding area. Upon a question, Mr. Wolin confirmed the project will be adequately served by existing and proposed public infrastructure and utilities. Mr. Wolin, stated the proposed development is compatible with surrounding area and complies with the standards of the C1A district requirements and all other applicable regulations. This represents the highest and best use for the proposed site.

Upon a question from Chairman Peters, Mr. Wolin stated he believes the proposal will not have adverse effect on surrounding properties. Mr. Wolin confirmed the proposed mixed use development is the highest and best use for the site. To leave it as all office or strictly residential development would not be appropriate. Mr. Thompson added that his client marketed the proposed site for an office development as indicated in the staff report but there is no demand.

Commissioner Steele asked the witness to define blight, to which Mr. Wolin stated he meant that it has been vacant for a while.

Commissioner Dubin asked to explain how they evaluated the rent structure. Mr. John O'Donnell, stated that office space price per sq. ft. needed to offset construction cost which is around $25/sq. ft. whereas existing office rates are around $15/sq. ft. For apartments, it is easier to evaluate existing rents at nearby apt. complexes. Mr. O'Donnell explained they looked at rents at apartment buildings that were built since the mid-90s and discounted them for the location of their building in south Evanston. Additionally, he stated they are building a higher quality building than what is already around them.

Commissioner Opdycke asked the applicant to confirm they do not need the City to upgrade existing utility infrastructure. Mr. Thompson confirmed.

Commissioner Asaro asked if the proposal meets the TIF district’s goal for this site. Mr. Wolin confirmed.
Commissioner Opdycke asked for which purpose the TIF funds will be used. Mr. Thompson explained the TIF dollars would be used to offset the office component of the development. He stated that the proposal will meet the statutory requirements for TIF money allocation. The project will contribute approximately $16 mil to the TIF just from the property taxes over the life of the TIF.

Mr. Thompson, introduced the final witness, Luay R. Aboona principal with KLOA, the traffic consultant who provided quick summary of his qualifications.

Mr. Aboona explained it is his opinion the proposal will not create a significant amount of new traffic due to the type of uses and especially due to the proximity to the transit stations. The traffic that will be generated can be accommodated by the existing road network without significant impact. Majority of the trips will be allocated to the alley.

Mr. Thompson summarized that the proposal meets the criteria for granting the special use for the proposed planned development. He thanked the staff and the community for their work and input. He confirmed that Design Evanston also supports the project.

Chairman Peters asked Mr. Aboona how they reached the conclusion that the project will not create undue traffic congestion. Mr. Aboona went over the site design, modification of the right-only exit driveway on Chicago Avenue, more elbow roof for loading area and parking in rear. He explained the census data that shows only 60% of residents in the area use their vehicles for commute to work. He also explained the newly proposed right-turn only lane on Chicago Ave. The Level of Service on surrounding road network will not be significantly impacted which the city engineer confirmed.

Commissioner Ford asked what percentage of households own a vehicle. Mr. Aboona stated they did not look at car ownership.

Commissioner Dubin pointed the Northwestern shuttle bus also has a stop in the area. She stated she has concern with the traffic exiting the alley and making left-turn movements and asked for the demographic of the anticipated tenants. Mr. Aboona pointed to design elements that will enable vehicles to better see oncoming traffic and they do not anticipate a lot of vehicles using the alley to exit onto Main St.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that 48% of people in the area are renters and they hope to access that market and get the demographic that is moving north from Chicago such as those living in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. He pointed out that this will not be student housing. There are 49 units that are either two or three bedroom units.

Commissioner Ford asked what is the automobile ownership in the area. The proposal is for 2 parking spaces for 3 units. Parking in the neighborhood is very tight. Mr. O'Donnell explained that there are 104 parking spaces for 112 units. They studied 1717 Ridge, the Reserve and Park Evanston developments which have less than the one to one ratio.

Chairman Peters asked if some spaces will be shared between the uses. Mr. O'Donnell explained that they anticipate retail uses will use the surface parking spaces during the day and that the residential units will then use them over night.
Commissioner Freeman asked staff about the parking ratio at the AMLI development. Ms. Klotz stated that she does not have the exact data on AMLI available, but in the last 10-15 years the developments have been approved with typically one-to-one ratio. Mr. Freeman confirmed this proposal is for the ratio below that and asked for clarification on for which time of the day the traffic impact is expected to be minimal.

Mr. Aboona, explained the typical peak periods during the day that are studies for traffic studies. Mr. Freeman stated that he cannot envision this project not adding to the existing traffic congestion during the rush hour. Mr. Aboona stated that the intersection carries approximately 1,800 cars during the evening rush hour and the proposed development is projected to add 30 trips during that period. That is why the traffic will not alter the operation of the intersection.

Commissioner Freeman asked for a clarification about green space provided. Mr. Thompson explained the wider sidewalk while Ms. Klotz explained there is a 2nd floor terrace for the residents and tenants of the building and the City is negotiating a payment for the improvement to the St. James Park.

Commissioner Freeman expressed concern about the use of the alley by all uses and asked staff if they have concerns about that. Ms. Klotz stated staff does not perceive that as a problem.

Commissioner Shure asked how the bike path will be impacted by the proposed curb cut on Chicago Avenue to which Ms. Klotz indicated it would operate the same as all other curb cuts along Chicago Avenue.

Commissioner Steele asked what type of retail tenants do they anticipate, to which Mr. Thompson indicated it will probably be smaller tenants not as big as Walgreens and CVS which require a drive-through use.

Commissioner Steele asked which tenants will be able to share the 30 parking spaces, to which Mr. O'Donnell clarified only the retail tenants will be allowed to use the surface parking spaces.

Commissioner Steele expressed concern how parking limitation will be regulated, it does not balance out. Mr. O'Donnell stated they will pay for the loss of four on-street parking spaces that are lost, so that is a public benefit. Relative to the on-site parking spaces, it will be a shared arrangement with limitation on how long the patrons can park. Most other developments in the area do not have parking for retail spaces. The parking will be regulated so that between 8 pm and 9 am for example residents can park in those spaces.

Commissioner Ford asked for clarification that occupants of the office spaces will be asked not to park on site, which Mr. O'Donnell confirmed. Commissioner Ford expressed concern that retail visitors would want to enter the site via Chicago Avenue curb cut which is designated as exit only, and he asked how that will be prevented. Mr. Aboona explained there would be do-not enter and one-way only signage and the curb cut will be angled so that it is very clear it is an exit only.
Commissioner Opdycke stated he is troubled by the parking. He asked is it possible to go two levels below grade with parking. Mr. Thompson reiterated this is a TOD development with terrific public transportation. Adding more parking is just inviting more cars and congestion. That is not the intent of this development.

Commissioner Opdycke asked how many parking spaces are occupied at AMLI development. Mr. Jeff Clark with O’Donnell Investments stated that the AMLI development is not fully occupied. The Reserve and 1717 Ridge do not have parking occupancy ratio of one-to-one. They are both around 95%. This is around 93% and has much better proximity to the transit stops.

Commissioner Freeman stated those other developments do not have a retail component and he for example has two cars that sit in his driveway while he takes Metra to work. He asked for clarification if the applicant is assuming that residents who will be using transit also will not own cars. Mr. Thompson explained this will be a TOD market attracting individuals that do not own cars. They take public transportation.

Commissioner Asaro stated he lives in this area and is in favor of this site being developed. The objective of the TIF Study done in 2003 is to provide more parking. He is wondering why not use TIF money to provide additional parking, like in the downtown Evanston. This is not a problem but an opportunity.

Mr. Thompson stated their proposal is a response to for what there is need in the market. He cannot speak for the staff.

Commissioner Steele stated there is a lot of concern about congestion and that is where the efforts should go to alleviate those concerns with TIF funds. Mr. O’Donnell stated that if there were a public garage here, there would be more congestion. The TOD development reduces the carbon footprint. The younger generations do not have as many cars today.

Commissioner Lewis asked about Code requirements for parking from office and retail components of the proposal. Ms. Klotz stated the parking requirement for residential is based on the number of bedrooms. Studios and one bedrooms need a total of 78 parking spaces, two-bedrooms require a total of 63 spaces and three-bedrooms would need 14 spaces. The retail area is required to have 1 space/350 sq. ft. of gross floor area with an exemption for the first 2,000 sq. ft. As such the retail portion of the development is required to have 28 parking spaces. The office use is required to have 2 spaces/1,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area with a total requirement of 31 parking spaces. As such the total requirement for the whole building is 216 parking spaces.

Commissioner Lewis confirmed the commercial portion is required to provide a total of 59 parking spaces. Upon a question, Mr. Thompson confirmed only the 30 surface spaces are for the use of commercial tenants. Ms. Klotz reminded the commissioners that the parking requirements do not account for the proximity to transit stations. As such, for planned developments near such stations the parking provided typically accounts for that.

At this time the Commission took a 10 minute break at 8:35 pm.
Following the break, Commissioner Opdycke asked for the material samples and asked how thick the granite portion will be. Mr. Cooper showed the samples that were presented to SPAARC with standard modular brick. There will be glazed ceramic product, modern day terra-cotta. The granite portion will be 30” high with 1.25 inches thickness attached to the masonry block back up. Commissioner Opdycke asked if the granite could be 4-5” thick because there are buildings downtown which have that thickness and have great durability. Mr. Cooper said that is usually not necessary today but will take that under advisement.

Chairman Peters asked staff to mark the brick sample as Exhibit 4, granite as Exhibit 5 and the ceramic as Exhibit 6.

Chairman Peters opened the meeting to public comment.

Heek Yung Sung, 515 Main St., said he is an architect, he was sworn in, and asked where are the elevations that show relationship between this building and surrounding buildings.

Mr. Cooper stated that the taller portion of the building is 20 ft. north of the adjacent building to the south. The base is 24 ft. tall. The building to the north is 98 ft. tall as estimated and the building to the east is 75 ft. tall.

Third Ward Alderman Melissa A. Wynne indicated the building to the north is 105 ft. tall.

Mr. William Cannon, property manager at 515 Main St condominiums, asked if the right turn lane for southbound Chicago Ave is being proposed or is it there now. Mr. Aboona stated the only change they are proposing is a right-turn designated lane on Chicago Ave northbound. Everything else would stay as it is.

Discussion followed on the number of existing parking spaces in front of 900 Chicago Avenue. There would be no changes to parking spaces on Main St. adjacent to the property.

Upon a question, Mr. Aboona stated all deliveries would take place in rear of the building and not off of the streets.

Jim Ludwig, 515 Main St., was sworn in. He stated he is a licensed real estate broker and thinks there should be at least 200 parking spaces for this development. He also stated the rendering is a bit deceptive and that the alley behind 515 Main St is very busy due to the bank and commercial uses. This project will create an even worse safety situation. He encouraged the Commission not to approve the development with any parking variances.

Upon a question for clarification, Ms. Klotz again reiterated that the parking ratio is typically reduced for planned developments.

John Ruskdaeschel of 515 Main St. stated he was sworn in. He is concerned about the height of the building, the light reduction on his building due to the proposed building and parking. The 525 Kedzie building was converted to condominiums recently and they have a shortage of parking. There are 24 parking spaces for 20 units. The 800 Hinman
building has a waiting list of 20 people for parking spaces because of the more affluent tenants in the renovated building. And the AMLI building is only 60% occupied.

Commissioner Steele asked about the parking situation at 515 Main St. Mr. Ruskdaeschel stated he has a tenant in his unit who has two cars and can only park one car on the property.

William Cannon, 515 Main St. manager, stated his building has problems with parking and traffic. There is no available parking in his building. The tenants in the building use public transportation but they do not sell their cars. They have even installed an electric charging station. There are 30% people who rent in the building and they all have cars. The shared parking idea is a little optimistic; people work all kinds of hours now. He also stated nobody can say if the development will have a negative impact or not. Nobody can say that, too many factors. The alley at 515 Main St. is blocked all the time. The bank does not want to tow them. It demonstrates the fact that there is need for parking. The biggest issue is the parking.

Upon a question by Commissioner Steele, Mr. Cannon said he does not know if the bank officially allows the restaurant to park in their lot in the afterhours. But they do not want to offend them and they do not want to tow them. Delivery trucks and people that go to Starbucks tend to park in the alley sometimes too.

Mr. Gus Friedlander, 852 Hinman, was sworn in, and stated there has been a tremendous change in the neighborhood while he has been living there since 1995. There is constant activity with a lot of transients. His building has no dedicated parking. All the deliveries are made through the alley behind the subject site. The 112 units on this site should have at a minimum 112 parking spaces. The building will further negatively impact an already bad parking problem in the neighborhood. This should be a mixed use building though, but the height is an issue also. So he would like to request a continuance.

Chairman Peters stated the request for continuance has to be in writing.

Mr. Friedlander continued by saying the perspective drawings are not correct because of the lens that was used. It is not possible to get that view. The building appears much more isolated. The building should be no higher than the AMLI building. There are too many units proposed, it will be a traffic nightmare.

Ms. Klotz stated staff has received written letters of opposition that were passed out to the Commission before the meeting. She also stated that Allison Kamen, 515 Main St. just submitted a written petition for continuance of the case.

Chairman Peters confirmed 515 Main St is within the 1,000 ft of the development and asked if there is any other public comment.

There being none, Chairman Peters asked Mr. Thompson if he wants to respond to the public now or at the next hearing.

Mr. Thompson stated there has been ample discussion on parking and traffic. He presented testimony by professionals who are experts in their fields and they presented
facts on what the project will bring to the community. The project will not add a significant amount of traffic. These are experts who testified that this project will not have a negative impact on surrounding property values. Mr. Thompson further stated the height requested is within the Ordinance allowance. The Ordinance also allows a total of 40% increase to the unit count and they are proposing less than that. The City of Chicago allows a 50% reduction in parking for developments near the transit stops and their proposal is right around that number.

Chairman Peters asked the Commission what items need to be discussed at the next hearing. Commissioner Freeman stated he would like to be able to understand the parking situation at AMLI, at 515 Main St and at other buildings in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Steele said it would be helpful to see what the intersection looks like today. Take a camera and show what it is like today. What are other options that could be explored to make this feasible?

Mr. Mark Muenzer, Director of Community Development, stated the right-turn arrow and dedicated lane on southbound Chicago Avenue is correct. He stated staff will present information on parking ratios for surrounding buildings and other planned developments as well as provide a summary on what other communities require for TOD developments.

Mr. Opdycke stated that he has a problem with parking and invited the applicant to solve the severe parking problem.

Chairman Peters said Wednesday Feb 26, 2014 could be a feasible date for a next meeting on this case and asked for a motion to continue.

Commissioner Galloway said it would be helpful to have information about other TOD developments; the use of parking in the area from City’s parking department and the state of the alley in the rear (dimensions, loading areas, etc.). The development seems deficient on parking. What if none of the residents or office tenants would be allowed to park on the street?

Commissioner Ford also stated there is a need for a better copy of the TOD study.

Mr. Damir Latinovic, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner, stated the Main St. TOD study is currently in the final stages. There is a public website with preliminary documents and drafts and he will make sure the Commission members receive a link to the Main St. TOD study.

Chairman Peters asked if February 26 is satisfactory to the applicant, to which Mr. Thompson confirmed that is okay. Upon a question, Ms. Kamen confirmed the proposed continuance date is also okay for her.

Commissioner Ford made a motion to continue the case to February 26, 2014. Commissioner Shure seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by voice call 8-0.
4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Freeman motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Commissioner Ford seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Damir Latinovic
Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Community Development Department