Thursday November 13, 2008


Board Members Absent: Susan Kaplan, Eli Port, Vicky McKinley

Staff Present: Carl Caneva HHS, Karen Taira Ecology Center, Morris Robinson Economic Development Planner

I. Approval of Minutes for October 16, 2008
   • E. Kinney motioned to approve the October 16, 2008 minutes, E. McCall seconded the motion

II. City of Evanston Economic Development Coordinator Morris Robinson
   • Chair Sciarra introduced Morris Robinson Economic Development Planner (EDP) for the City of Evanston. Mr. Robinson has been the EDP for the past 11 years with the City of Evanston (COE).
   • Mr. Robinson gave a brief history of the development of the City stating there are some limitations as it is landlocked and 40% or greater is not for profit due to Northwestern University and religious institutions. Historically, Evanston industry was located along the Mayfair Rail Line, and was responsible for land pollution. Now there are few industrial manufacturers left in the city. This declining industrial base has presented new opportunities for COE; new owners had to clean up the polluted land resulting in a cleansing of Evanston. The area near Dempster and Dodge is a good example as there was a massive remediation project due to being located on a former manufacturing site. The cleanup improved the environment of the city. In the 1980s there was a large demand for a research park, the City of Evanston and NU partnered into a research park which failed. One building was built another renovated no scientists on board. Desperate for tax dollars the COE created a TIF District, these were the first steps to Evanston’s renewal.
- Mr. Robinson stated large developments are not the way of the future. Developer's perceptions have changed now home buyers want green strategies as part of their home.
- The Board was invited to attend Site Plan And Review Commission (SPARC) to get an idea of the processes that goes into how sites get approved. At SPARC projects are questioned regarding potential ground pollution and building design and materials are reviewed. Evanston’s first consideration for review is the Zoning Map, which defines what types of developments can happen and where. The COE uses Formed Based Zoning getting input from city staff and residents to set requirements on the character for a neighborhood or development area.
- Mr. Robinson stated the goal is keep Evanston livable as a “City”. In order to assist in the development of downtown and several other areas the City established 6 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. **Chair Sciarr** asked how the TIF funds are managed. Mr. Robinson stated the TIF will have a life of 23 years. The TIFs are used to pay off debt, to further development. All taxing bodies have to approve of the TIF. The biggest participant is the School District. The tax on the property is frozen at the 1st year amount until the 23rd year. The oldest TIF is the downtown TIF that will be due next year. 2010 will bring economic boons to the school district.
- Mr. Robinson thanked the board for the opportunity to speak and offered to visit the group from time to time to give updates on new developments.
- **S. Besson** asked how the process of economic development works. Mr. Robinson stated the city has a retention and attraction program. He works with residents to determine wants and needs in an area. A marketing profile is then created. He works closely with the Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce to develop 11 business districts. The city has incentives for Business Districts that work together (3 or more band together). He keeps a list of every vacant commercial building in the city, and receives calls asking for space.
- **Chair Sciarr** asked has the city interviewed current businesses to find out what they needed and pair them with another business that supplies the tools they need. Mr. Robinson stated the City of Evanston has a catalog of what is produced and what services are offered by businesses.
- **E. McCall** asked what the City of Evanston tries to accomplish on the macro level. Mr. Robinson has stated that the city is involved with Commonwealth Edison, and is looking to revisit the Civic Center.
- **S. Besson**: Does the City of Evanston work with other municipalities or Not For Profits (NFPs) to develop regional plans? Mr. Robinson stated the other suburbs north of Chicago have begun to meet monthly to exchange ideas. 8-10 years ago the Evanston Visitor and Convention Bureau began, in cooperation with NU. This has become Chicago Northshore Visitor and Convention Bureau. **Chair Sciarr** stated that green may also mean being able to walk to places rather than using some form of transportation.
• Mr. Robinson stated his job was to determine how to get more green, in a financial sense, into Evanston.
• Mr. Robinson made reference to several developers that were stepping up to address the issue of green.
• Chair Sciarru asked how many jobs were in Evanston. Mr. Robinson stated that he didn’t have that information but could get the Board employment statistics per employee. 17 Employers make up 60-70% of the employment.
• Chair Sciarru asked what the bulk of Mr. Robinson’s calls are regarding, he stated it was mostly retail.
• E. McCall stated the downtown area was built on an idea from 20 years ago is there any way that the City of Evanston would look into a plan for the channel. Mr. Robinson stated the channel is owned by the metropolitan water reclamation district making it difficult to plan development in the area.
• The Board thanked Mr. Robinson for his presentation.

III. Green Building Ordinance
• Chair Sciarru reviewed the Human Services Committee meeting in October. Board members are looking into how to address the issue of enforcement. The building department stated the problem with holding the certificate of occupancy; the city has issued a TCO for any existing issues. The City of Evanston seems to be leaning more toward a performance bond. The Board will also look at an escalating dollar amount. E. Kinney is questioning how much a bond would cost and what that cost would add to the project. R. Kuntz mentioned a surety bond to be set at a premium; this money could be kept by the City of Evanston. C. Caneva stated the Green Building Issue is on the agenda for the Dec. 1, 2008 HSC meeting. Jill Chambers will look into how many projects this will effect. Several ideas were discussed, blacklisting developers, raising permit fees, charging performance fees. E. Kinney stated the city adopted the Evanston Climate Action Plan and its adoption may be a good indicator for the Green Building Ordinance. She further stated the City of Evanston wanted to start at Silver. While the board wanted to pursue Gold for City of Evanston buildings it was amenable to Silver. Board will look into training for inspectors and energy officials.
• Board still needs clarity regarding developers C. Caneva stated he will follow-up.

IV. City’s stance on Geothermal Wells
• C. Caneva gave a brief update informing members the city is meeting with contractors, members of the Illinois Groundwater Professionals, and attending courses regarding the installation and regulation of Geothermal Wells. Though, there are no current ordinances in the municipal code the city is researching how to regulate these wells.
V. Old Business
   a. Noise Ordinance
   b. Idling and Leaf Blower Citations
   • Chair Sciarra requested volunteers to follow-up with research. He requested time for the next agenda to address the issue. C. Caneva will send information to group about Oak Park’s regulations

VI. New Business
   • S. Besson stated she met with several other Evanston environmental groups (Evanston Environmental Assn., Keep Evanston Beautiful, Citizens for a Greener Evanston) concerning mission statements and goals, in an effort to coordinate efforts and minimize redundancies. All groups reflected there exists a need for more information about political candidates for local office. Group members also voiced a need to establish a communication network.
   • P. Finnegan offered to provide a matrix of activities, and to assist developing a strategic plan for the Environment Board.

P. Finnegan made a motion to adjourn at 9:30pm seconded by S. Beeson