

Planning & Development Committee
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of December 4, 2008
Council Chambers – 7:00 p.m.
Evanston Civic Center

Aldermen Present: S. Bernstein, A. Hansen, D. Holmes, L. Jean-Baptiste, E. Moran,
C. Wollin, M. Wynne

Staff Present: D. Argumedo, K. Cox, S. Guderley, D. Marino, B. Newman, T. Norfleet

Presiding Official: Alderman Moran

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Moran called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m., a quorum being present.

(P1) Consideration of Plan Commission Recommendation to Adopt the Draft Downtown Plan as Revised by the Plan Commission
Plan Commission recommendation to approve the Draft Downtown Plan as revised by the Plan Commission

Chair Moran explained that the purpose of this meeting is to hear public comment on the Revised Downtown Plan as recommended by the Plan Commission. He said that each alderman has thousands of pages of transcripts and submissions by the public but they are glad to have them and they want to hear the opinions of those present also and that this meeting will complete the citizen comment submitted at public meetings.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste added that even though the Committee is scaled down, the meeting is being televised and all members will receive the meeting minutes and will take the comments into consideration.

Chair Moran opened the floor to the public.

Mr. Fred Tanenbaum said he has lived in Evanston at Sherman Plaza for one and a half years and lived in a condominium Chicago for 28 years prior to living here. He asked whether the green building standards discussed in two articles in the Pioneer Press newspaper would be enforced in relation to the Fountain Square tower. Chair Moran replied that he could not give an unconditional answer but it is relevant and it is under discussion. Mr. Tanenbaum said the members of the Human Services Committee and the Committee that gave the approval of the building recommend that it be a green building, and he believes it would behoove all of us to do so.

Mr. Tanenbaum said the developer who built Sherman Plaza is also proposing the Fountain Square building. He said he wants the Commission to know that when Sherman Plaza was sold, the assessment level quoted by the developer was significantly understated and when it was turned over to the condominium board, to finish paying the bills for that year there had to be a reassessment of one and a half months and the following year an increase in assessments by 35% was necessary to cover the budget. Mr. Tanenbaum said that at the time the condo board took over the building an engineer's study showed 91 deficiencies. Since then, the condo board and management company have been in negotiations with the developer and two thirds of these

deficiencies have been corrected. He asked whether the City is aware of these deficiencies, saying that you can see paint bleeding through that was put on when the building was built and that the building has had to replace all the carpets, which had no padding under them and were not of the quality the residents would have liked, and that his balcony was not level so when it rained the water ran from the edge of the balcony towards the patio door, and he had to have it refinished. He thanked the Committee for their time.

Chair Moran reminded the citizens to try to keep the focus on the Downtown Plan rather than on a particular development for this meeting, but added that he appreciates Mr. Tanenbaum's remarks.

Mr. Jim Corirossi introduced himself as President of the Downtown Residents' Association (DRA), an organization of condo unit owners in the downtown area, dedicated to balancing downtown development with residential quality of life and who has participated in the planning process from the start, presenting their view to the Plan Commission on December 7, 2007. He said they have submitted their position on the revised Plan to the Committee.

Mr. Corirossi said they view the downtown business district as a prime economic engine for Evanston however they feel the plan does not sufficiently address the requirement for a comprehensive plan with incentives to attract the appropriate mix of local and national businesses needed to sustain a vibrant city center for residents and visitors. He said it appears the main focus of the plan is to determine how many stories you can have in a building and it should focus more on economic development with a detailed plan built upon the strategy of restoration of the Varsity Theater as a performing arts venue, adding that the Century Theaters have proved that an entertainment complex attracts visitors, producing much needed revenue for the City and its businesses. He cited Wilmette's transformation of the old Wilmette Theater into a marquis north shore attraction, saying Evanston should create a similar space here.

He said the Civic Center should be located in downtown Evanston because of its parking and public transportation accessibility, saying that the current location is not accessible by public transportation.

He said the DRA believes the proposed zoning's maximum height for the north edge is not appropriate and it should be zoned the same as the northwest and the east edges and zoning should be RD2 with base heights of 66' which is 6 stories with a maximum height with bonuses of 110' or 10 stories, keeping all the edges the same. They believe the area west of Maple Avenue and south of Davis Street currently in the west core should be placed in the south hatch and the east side of Maple could remain in the west core, and the unclassified area at southeast corner of Davis Street and Chicago Avenue should be designated as part of the east edge. The DRA believes that in the west core (G) and east core (H) the height differential between the base and maximum height with bonuses should be greater than 3 stories because this minimal height difference will not provide incentive for developers to incorporate public benefit bonuses for the return value of so few stories. They recommend that the base height be reduced to 10 stories, with a maximum bonus height of 165' or 15 stories, a 50% increase which they believe will give developers incentive.

Mr. Corirossi concluded that these recommendations would result in a skyline moving from 6 to 10 stories on the edges, to 10-15 stories in the east west core districts, and 15 to 25 stories in the central core district. The 3 traditional districts would remain 3 and 5 stories. Mr. Corirossi recommended that the plan stays at the 3-5 stories for the traditional area on west Davis Street that was addressed at the November 25th Special P&D meeting, saying out of all the traditional districts, only a few people objected.

Mr. Corirossi said it is important to determine which types of projects will require Plan Commission and public review. The DRA agrees with the process for new developments which states that Plan Commission and public review must be required for any projects in the core district that exceed a height of 110' or more. They disagree that there are a limited number of opportunities for new development in downtown. With the as of right ability to build higher based on revised zoning restrictions, current property owners may have incentive to sell or tear down existing buildings to create higher density developments, for example, the people who spoke at the special meeting November 25th.

Mr. Corirossi said the DRA commends the Plan Commission on the public benefit bonus structure. The bonuses, especially for green roof and LEED certified designs, contribute to the quality of life in downtown and benefit all Evanston residents and visitors.

The DRA believes that regarding reconfiguring some privately owned parking lots (such as the one near the Women's Club) into green spaces, they recommend adding some city owned lots to the list, such as the lot on Oak between Davis and Church. It would be an easy conversion because the city already owns this land, otherwise the city would either have to buy it or convince the owner to convert their property to parks. The DRA believes the suggested park to the west of the YMCA along Grove is an inappropriate choice for a park because the alley is an access route to and from the YMCA parking lot on the south and a hazard for children. They feel, at best it is an enhancement for the residents of the building to the west. They asked for more specific plans to resituate Oldberg Park and reconfigure Orrington into Clark. They also believe the plan should specify requirements for independent light, wind and transportation studies for major new developments and that the transportation studies should include all impacted areas such as Sheridan Rd., Ridge, Howard, Chicago Avenue and Clark. They believe there is adequate parking but residential as well as guest parking should be required and that public parking will be enhanced by the plan's recommendation to put parking under green open spaces.

Mr. Corirossi concluded that the DRA understands the City must address a number of issues and satisfy a variety of constituencies as it envisions a vibrant and viable downtown, however they feel that as residents of the downtown, their voices are especially relevant and hope that their comments, concerns, and recommendations will play a key role in the Committee's deliberations. He thanked the Committee for their time. Chair Moran thanked him for his comments.

Mr. Reed Beidler, a property owner on the 1000 block of Davis Street for more than 25 years, said he is familiar with the dramatic changes in Evanston over the years, but he said he could not have foreseen what would happen 10 years ago, nor can he foresee 10 years hence. He commended the hard work that has gone into the plan. As someone who has operated in this particular block in Evanston, he questions its designation as a traditional zone and the recommended as of right restrictions of height and density. He has met with his neighbors and property owners in the area and his opinion is that we should build a viable downtown core that has enough mass and activity to support both residences as well as businesses. He said to zone a block traditional that butts up against the major transit systems and has 8-10 story buildings all around it and to not allow it to develop in the future, seems illogical. He does not have nor does he know of any of his neighbors who have immediate plans to expand, but it doesn't feel right to him. He said that to him, old and run down is not traditional, explaining that his building is a former auto repair store and the one across the street is a former bowling alley that's been converted to a retail store, explaining that he would characterize the block as being old and worn as opposed to traditional and charming.

Mr. Beidler concluded that with the height of the buildings around it and the transportation and parking, it does not seem right to try to make it a traditional gateway to Evanston. He proposed that zoning should be more generic and then allow the various agencies to interact with the developer, as opposed to trying to carve out specific areas and trying to tell them how we think they should look. Chair Moran thanked him.

Mr. Jeff Smith of 2724 Harrison, said he is speaking as an individual, though he said, his points are shared with many people. He said there had been no public comment until a few weeks ago on the downtown plan as it has evolved since December, 2007. The report to this committee states that there were 15 Plan Commission meetings but the last 12 that were held had no public comment on the downtown plan. There were 9 focus groups that met before the consultants formulated the plan but none consisted of average existing Evanston residents who use and shop downtown except one focus group with new downtown residents, and there were none with downtown workers or commuters. He said to the extent that downtown was to be everyone's neighborhood, it seems an omission that everyone was not a subject of focus. Considering that workers and people who come downtown are key to any smart growth planning, it seems an omission not to include those who come downtown every day where they come from, how they get there, what methods of transportation they use, how long does it takes them and why do or don't they use this form of transportation. He said he provided to the Plan Commission in October, at the request of a number of residents, his attempted synopsis of the plan, pointing out the good things as well as some omissions and inconsistencies. He said that in May of 2008 some of his comments were addressed such as green building, preservation and adaptive re-use, and incentives were added. He said the words minority, African American and gentrification don't appear in the plan and he thinks that who moves and shops there reflects Evanston's character. He said the community has the right if not the obligation to determine what type of town it wants to be and Evanston takes pride in its open mindedness, tolerance and very positive virtues, which he would like to see mentioned.

Mr. Smith continued that there is insufficient attention to uses in the plan, adding that traditional planning focuses on uses. He said form based zoning has some potential drawbacks in that it is mainly setting the form of the building and coupled with increasing base heights, you are letting the market decide what goes there, rather than saying where you want for example, auto shops, bowling alleys and residences. Mr. Smith said we've been promised revenues by all this development but what we are seeing are a lot of holes in the ground on which nothing is being built for years at a time and fiscal holes in the ground in which the American taxpayer is being asked to shovel money. He said it is therefore important to look at what we are incentivizing and how because when you change zoning, you change the game. The success of a bonus plan depends on where the base zoning is set and how the bonuses are measured. He believes this plan does a very good job of setting forth criteria for bonuses, however it is critical to not give away the store in the base zoning and this plan has a lot of massive up zoning. The base height zoning recommendations are still the equivalent of granting an enormous site allowance of density and mass to much of downtown beyond that which currently exists without the city getting any reciprocal public benefit. The plan does freeze the base height of the three most traditional areas but it also allows them to be exceeded through bonuses. He disagrees that having a low rise traditional type of area necessarily means a lack of economic development, noting that if you go to Central Street from Greenbay all the way to Crawford you will see in the old, traditional and established storefronts, not one vacancy. He said the only vacancies that he is aware of currently in the buildings that have been developed in the past few years because the rents are too high and, he said, the same is true of downtown Chicago, pointing out that there is not necessarily a correspondence between putting a lot of downtown residents stacked on top of each other and the vibrancy of retail. He said it is a delicate balance between what is built, who is shopping there and who is coming in and out. He concluded that the additional bonus grants of height and mass

in the plan would provide an incentive to densify downtown much further still and we need to look at the consequences of that. He said citizen testimony was strongly against it. He said Barb Rackley did a good job of assembling a spreadsheet with about a thousand citizen comments showing what the people have asked for, and there are not many who want another 200 units a year downtown. He believes if a 218 unit tower being built is the result of this plan's approval, there would be a gross disconnect between government and those who it is supposed to serve. He said he does not have a problem with heights being increased in many parts of downtown, maybe many parts, but it shouldn't be everywhere and there should be a mechanism in place to prevent it. Currently the research park is limited to an approximate 65' height, but the plan allows an approximate 165' base height, a 100' increase for nothing, which can be increase to 275'. This includes the Copycat triangle which he said has no reason to be that tall. He said that the consultants have said that some of the buildings currently allowed in downtown have been a result of a broken process, but the plan seems to say that what many consider a bad process should dictate what then comes in, and planning should do the opposite of that.

Mr. Smith said that what has been done with the Fountain Square block in the final plan is a compromise that may please no one and the Plan Commission has put a lot of hard work into that block. He believes that so much time elapsed between citizen comment and the original presentation of the plan that when the Plan Commission finally addressed it there had been a loss of sight. He said there was so much focus on that block that perhaps the rest of downtown was ignored. He said that with the current plan, instead of a slim tower on an otherwise traditional block, you could end up with a mass spanning the entire block, yet without distinctiveness or the icon status that the Klutznik Anderson team sought to present. He would allow additional height above the 25 story limit if the façade of the existing 708 Church building was preserved or a true plaza replaced the fountain square building, but this plan does not mandate that and by exempting the 708 Church block from the plan, we could end up with the worst of both worlds. He said there has been some attempt to segregate those two discussions, but the 708 Church building is the gorilla in the room and you can't talk about the downtown without talking about it. Mr. Smith said there are more creative things to consider if they are to reconfigure the street so it can be usable by the public without closing the key intersection in downtown. He said a pocket park ceases to be pleasant and is not used if it's windy, dark and surrounded by tall buildings, advising those present to go to downtown Chicago in areas where 25 story buildings are and see the empty benches and what is and is not working. He knows the consultants have made a yeoman's effort to make things attractive but they sometimes translate differently in reality.

Mr. Smith agrees with the DRA that there are not only a few development opportunities downtown, explaining that developers make money because they see opportunities planners don't see, for example, 1890 Maple. No one could have foreseen that someone would take a 5 year old building, tear it down and put up 14 stories of residences. He feels it is a mistake to rely on a representation by a planner stating these are the only opportunities, repeating that zoning changes the game: suddenly what was not feasible becomes feasible. He said that unlike the Central Street plan, where there was a lot of post-approval input by the public, that is to say the Planning & Development Committee and City Council approved it in principal and then it went back to the Plan Commission for more public input during the zoning process, which is legally required, here the zoning recommendations were already very specific and if this Council just approved the plan as is, citizens and property owners will be hearing from the Plan Commission that their hands are tied, the Council approved it, and all we can do is implement it. Therefore, he said, it is important to get it right now.

Mr. Smith said that if he were on this committee he would not vote to approve and send back to the Plan Commission as is, the Downtown Plan, as much as there is to like about it and despite all the hard work that has gone into it. He said he would do three things: have some focus groups or

similar process so people who haven't been heard from could be heard, specifically residents who use downtown, people who commute there and Evanstonians and others who drive to or through downtown, holding citizen comment open for more detailed written responses; he would scale back the base heights, especially in the research park and areas that should be truly transitional so they don't loom over residential neighborhoods or churches; and finally he would preserve basic sense of permitted uses in at least some identified areas. He said if we want to have recreation, a bowling alley or a performing arts center, it is not going to happen organically unless some area is set aside for it. He would preserve some of that sense so the city can guide downtown Evanston towards the needs and desires identified, to preserve a downtown for Evanston as everybody's neighborhood, for whom we plan. Chair Moran thanked him.

Mr. Scott Steinman, a building owner on West Davis Street, said regarding the traditional district issue there that he and the other building owners want to be treated fairly in whatever opportunities downtown might represent in the future and not be limited by the traditional restrictions. He said the plan seems reactionary rather than visionary, since he had seen a lot of development before the plan. He encouraged that the plan be for downtown but it seems to him that their block is being tossed out as a traditional bone while other places are being built up. He said Main Street and Central Street are traditional shopping areas that are worth maintaining. He feels that west Davis is a terrific opportunity because of its proximity to the post office and transportation, for density and energy conservation. He does not believe development would take away their storefronts, citing the Optima building on Davis having some great unique home grown businesses in its retail space and said there is no reason that wouldn't be able to exist in the future for west Davis Street as well. He agrees with Audio Consultants, whose business is also in its building, that the zoning limit could limit the building value, which would affect the future and viability of their businesses adversely, because their buildings can be used to help capitalize their businesses. He said the affect of the current development, in relation to its affect on the tax base makes it difficult to keep up with the rate that their taxes are increasing.

Mr. Steinman concluded that he is requesting that the Committee not approve the west Davis Street block as a traditional area because it would bury them and make them a slice out of the development, enclosing them in an area of tall buildings. He added that he walks to work on Davis Street, which he feels is part of downtown. He also recommended regarding the tax base, if they do decide that its better that west Davis stays a traditional designation, please consider that taxing them traditionally, for example, like it was in the 1950's. Chair Moran thanked him.

Mr. Jonathan Perman, Executive Director of the Evanston Chamber of Commerce, commended on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, the Plan Commission, staff and citizens who participated over the last three years on their hard work and commitment to the downtown, saying it is a great success today and that the development policies have had a profound affect on the tax base. He said the proposed plan is only a plan, intended to be flexible enough to change as market conditions change and that when the formation of the plan began, the economic conditions were different than they are now, which no one could have predicted. Mr. Perman said that similar to Evanston's 1993 Zoning Ordinance that was part of a stimulus package at a time when there was little private investment in Evanston, we need to consider whether we are providing enough stimuli for commercial development to flourish in the current poor economic conditions. He said that less than a month ago Council accepted the Evanston Climate Action Plan which calls for support of mixed use, green, high performing, transit oriented development that creates density, walkable communities connected to train lines and reduces the need for driving and burning fossil fuels. The Chamber of Commerce supports matching the downtown plan with these values, enabling strong opportunities for transit oriented development, especially those streets that are most closely linked with the CTA and Metra stations and lower parking requirements. He believes that overall the plan is a good one. It emphasizes land use principles that have worked

and recognizes the future challenges we face as we compete for jobs, business and consumer spending. He said that because a number of current trends used to formulate the plan are no longer valid, the Council needs to err heavily on the side of opportunity and incentive to reach the plan's goals. Because this neighborhood plan, unlike most others, recommends metrics in which the City can evaluate itself once the plan is in place, we should take those milestones very seriously and pursue optimizing economic development.

Mr. Perman said he believes form based zoning is an excellent direction as it gives smaller, as of right projects the right to be expedited with staff approval, rather than the often arduous trip through the Plan Commission.

Mr. Perman concluded that some of the limitations on development outside the core district may have the unintended affect of diminishing property values, putting the tax burden on all of the other Evanston tax payers. He asked that the Committee consider the unique perspective of building owners who both operate and own businesses in their buildings, and often have a wide vision. He said that when the planning process began, Evanston's retail sales tax revenue was growing at approximately 5-6%, whereas now it is stagnant and unemployment was 4% and is now about 6%. Regardless, many merchants desire the creation of new space around them and they want space options for themselves. He said new does not necessarily imply national chains or the end of independent stores and restaurants: the ones we love here in Evanston also need new space options to replace their worn buildings. Mr. Perman said that in a Chamber study released earlier this year, they prove that new mixed use residential and commercial development result in as many independent businesses moving into them as national chains.

Mr. Perman said with respect to the central core district, not to be afraid of height alone. If Evanston is to have a landmark building at its core, the Fountain Square block is widely agreed to be that place. He said round the block there are two commercial mixed used structures and one residential mixed use structure that range in height from 240 to 275'. A new, architecturally significant building that would stand out from the existing three structures is a sensible idea that local plan commissioners, architects and urban experts agree upon and it may be needed as a stimulus, if we can bring a balance between what is offered and the right public benefits that can accrue back to the community. Chair Moran thanked him.

Ms. Jeanne Lindwall of 625 Library Place commended the Plan Commission for greatly improving the balance and tone of the plan document since the public comment closed, but said she is troubled by the process of how the plan was developed. She feels we missed an opportunity to have a constructive dialogue how to move downtown development beyond the condo towers to a land use mix that diversifies our commercial base and attracts jobs that will sustain our quality of life and take the downtown to the next level. The history of the downtown over the last 50 years shows that there have been critical times, for instance, when Old Orchard opened, and downtown's role as a major shopping center disappeared and we recreated ourselves as an office center/headquarter city for American Hospital Supply and Washington National and others. We reinvented downtown again with the theaters and the mixed use development over the last 20 years. She said she worked with the Plan Commission on the 1989 plan and at that time the downtown was struggling with vacant stores. There was discussion with citizens about what the downtown should be. But she said this time many people have been frustrated with the process. In favor of the notion that there are certain parts of downtown that establish the character, identity and image of Evanston as a commercial center, those that were zoned D2 in the 1993 ordinance including the Fountain Square block and west Davis Street, and much of Sherman Avenue, are now called the traditional areas. She said that with zoning, even in the traditional areas, we will continue to see new development, and we should. She said the Chandler and Davis Land Company buildings are prime examples of the kind of new development that can fit in

within the existing zoning regulations and that the traditional zoning recommendations are a little more generous than the current zoning is, so she does not think the property owners on west Davis Street need to be concerned about their loss of property values because it is similar to what is in place now.

She said that transit oriented development (TOD) is density within a quarter mile walk of a transit station, which downtown Evanston has always been, and that from her perspective, having the residents a little further away and the commercial development right at the core is probably more attractive for the future, especially if you keep having the residential parking structures disrupting the pedestrian flow, which is one of her objections to the Klutznik proposal on the Fountain Square block because it will break up the retail frontage on Orrington.

Ms. Lindwall said she agrees that we need to have incentives to encourage commercial development when the economy turns around and we ought to be considering what kind of development we should be looking for. She talked to many people who participated in the downtown planning process who were frustrated that they did not feel their voices were heard. She said that as she has been out gathering signatures for her petition to run for Mayor, nothing gets a signature faster than knowing she is working in opposition to the tower.

Ms. Lindwall said she has been tracking what Sherman Plaza, Church Street Plaza (strictly office, 7 stories), and Park Evanston (Whole Foods & rental apartments) are yielding in terms of property taxes and she has found that comparing 2006 to 2007, for Church Street Plaza the City's share of the levee is lower than last year: \$332,146 in 2006 and \$310,870 for 2007; for Park Evanston, \$225,785 in 2006 and \$208,297 in 2007; Church Street Station, approximately \$156,000 in 2006 \$159,306 in 2007. She also said the length of time it takes to develop from the time it stops paying its former taxes, is to be considered, for example, Sherman Plaza, now that it is completed, is generating \$2.7 million, but for 2007 it was \$318,000, and it took 6 years, including \$10,000 in 2003, to get to this point. She concluded that the future of downtown and the rest of Evanston are tied together and balance and considering its image are important. She said all of Evanston's property values have gone up.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste asked Ms. Lindwall what conclusion she is reaching regarding re-development, as it sounds as though she is suggesting that we really didn't achieve significant progress in terms of tax revenue by building condos downtown.

Ms. Lindwall explained that when you engage in new development you must look at cost as well as benefits and while growing your tax base, encouraging new development is an important function of any community, but it is unrealistic to assume that building many condo towers in the downtown will lower people's taxes. It does reduce the tax rate because you have a bigger base to divide the tax levy by, but if the value of the condos is increasing property values in the surrounding area, you may not have had as big a gain as you were expecting. It begs the question of who should be the lead voice and whether it should be residents and how much is too much and how big is too big. She said Church St. Station, which is a substantial building, is yielding \$160,000. Ms. Lindwall said when the police and fire pension issue had just come up she calculated that to reduce the deficit by \$10 million/year, it would take twenty 40-story towers, all finished, and forty 20-story towers, which puts in perspective the question of what kind of a downtown we are striving to build. Chair Moran thanked her.

Ms. Judy Fiske of 2319 Sherman Avenue said she has lived there for many years and that she sold real estate for 20 years and worked with developers, especially on historic preservation projects in Evanston and Chicago. She now owns and operates a retail pet store with 7,000 customers. She said she knows almost all of them and where and why they shop in downtown

Evanston and what they like and don't like. Her landlord, who owns the largest parcel on the south side of Davis between Oak and Maple has told her he has no interest in developing his property. She said she supports the current downtown plan: specific building heights, green space and environmentally friendly building techniques and traditional zoning districts, however there is cause for her concern in the document because the city is less able to respond to citizens' concerns as development will occur, and will lose control over what truly makes Evanston unique: a diversified balance of retail, office and residential that characterizes downtown and insulates it from the extremes of market fluctuations. During the planning process, she said she and others talked about the need for office space, which draws thousands to our restaurants and retail shops and they talked about the need to protect traditional areas that provide reliable sales tax revenue, one way traffic patterns, that the wedding cake concept is obsolete and that there is overwhelming opposition to an iconic tower. They have talked about how streamlining the process makes it less likely that citizens will have a true voice as their city center changes and how the downtown condo owners might see towers rise all around them, which is not what they and others want. She feels that these concerns warrant serious public discussion and that the upcoming election cycle is an appropriate time to defer decision until the new council is seated, and allow the city to take the time to get this right. Chair Moran thanked her.

Mr. Mike Vasilko of 2728 Reese Avenue, a resident for almost 20 years, said he believes this plan has been strongly influenced by the developers of the 708 Church Street proposed tower. He said it reflects a subtle identification of what was once called the central core block at the 708 Church St. address which is now called "To Be Determined." He believes the representation is misleading and that the community has been calling out for the cloud over this block to be removed.

Mr. Vasilko suggested that a focus group be held to discuss Northwestern University's thoughts and the downtown plan together, since they border a considerable amount of the northeast edge. Chair Moran thanked him for his comments.

Ms. Barbara Janes of 802 Colfax said much is made in the introduction of the plan about the public process and public input, but she does not believe the consultants listened to the people. She said in the charrettes and the Parasol room, the consensus was that the citizens don't want a lot of tall buildings in downtown Evanston, yet when the plan was finished, there were many proposals of places to have tall buildings in many different locations downtown. She said that the plan has not considered what we want our downtown to be like and that maybe we need a consultant to consider this. She said the plan process seemed to be a justification for having a tower at 708 Church, since there was so much to do about that issue, but a plan should be a vision and we need to ask how we can make downtown as economically viable as possible while maintaining a character that the citizens want. She said she had never been on the second floor of 708 Church and she was stunned when she saw 40 office doors, with 1 to 4 inner offices inside of each, with 400-600 people per day, going in and out, visiting their therapists, chiropractors, dentists, doctors, massage therapists and social workers. She observed that these are the people who support the retail stores, but the plan seems to treat economic development like that as an afterthought, and that it is what you get in the bonuses. She seems the plan seems to be a justification for condos, and we'll throw in some retail because we need something interesting at the street level. She said the recommended heights along Emerson, since these buildings have been approved to be built, are dictating what we say we want at the north end of town, which seems backwards. She said she goes to Oak Park every week and she is constantly amazed when she walks through downtown Oak Park to the high school, that she can see the sun and there are many viable shops and it is nicely done with maps and things. She wonders why we do not have enough light and why we have wind tunnels.

Ms. Janes continued regarding height bonuses, that the accent seems to be on height, not on what is best for Evanston because developers are offered height bonuses if they are gold or platinum LEED certified. She believes with the information the Council has received about sustainability, they should require every new building in Evanston to achieve the highest level of energy efficiency and sustainability possible, though not necessarily require LEED certification, especially if Evanston is to be a lighthouse community, saying it might cost more initially, but it will save the owner and the planet in the long run. She said Evanston can and should be a lighthouse in the area of sustainability, starting here and now. If height bonuses are allowed, there need to be much tighter penalties for not achieving what has been proposed. She asked the Committee how many times have people come to them with promises that they later discover they can't meet, saying that once a building is built, we are stuck with it. She suggested that the good faith money described in the plan should be large enough that a developer cannot afford to forfeit it. We would still have to hope the building would be built as planned, but bonuses are a gift to a developer and the City should get much in return.

Ms. Jane does not think affordable housing bonuses should be given for anything but on site affordable housing. She has seen many cavalier developers donate money to get what they want. They may not want affordable units in their buildings, but we don't want tall buildings. If developers want something, they should give something substantial in return. She also said there needs to be an ordinance, clearly explaining the process and assuring that the units go to deserving people.

Regarding bonuses, Ms. Janes said she believes we need more parks but does not see the point of open space bonuses. We could end up with little pocket parks that are not useful to anyone and that bonus should be deleted. Ms. Janes suggests that historic preservation, the only useful bonus, should be for the actual building that is being preserved, explaining that it is very easy for developers to donate money to a fund, but it should be concrete and right at the site. Regarding the streetscape bonus, it is in the developer's best interest to beautify the streetscape surrounding that building and so we should not have to give anything away. Regarding public places, she wondered how public they would be. The way it is described is that right on the premises there is a public space. She wondered if the residents of a building really want her to hang out in their yard because it's a public space. She said she would change assistance to 5% from the proposed 10% and that no plan requiring city money should get any bonuses. She said we have the smarts and ability to solve our problems if we work together in the spirit of what is best for our city and that the downtown plan is a start but there is a long way to go before it is ready to be implemented for the benefit of the citizens of Evanston. Chair Moran thanked her.

Mr. Glenn Gray of 807 Davis Street, thanked the Council for their service to the community. He said he is concerned that some members of the Committee would like to vote for a 38 story downtown core district that is not supported by this community. He reminded the Committee of a meeting on Tuesday, March 27, 2007 where they were presented a redesign of Fountain Square cascading into two restaurants and new open spaces including historically preserved buildings and a 50 story monstrosity. A bait and switch, he said that was the first time any one had heard of a 50 story building. He said he attended several of the charrettes where Evanston citizens expressed their opposition to more skyscrapers in Evanston. The next time they heard about skyscrapers was when some supposedly independent consultants recommended that a certain block should be higher than any other block, which happened to be the same block as Fountain Square. He said the only other support for the tower came from inappropriate comments by Mr. Woods, who he believes is biased which does not instill confidence that the process is fair and absent of undue influence. He reminded the Committee of the hundreds of people who spoke out against the tower and the thousands of lawn signs displayed. He said he was disappointed in the vote to table the issue, and that the extended height will not solve the City's financial problems,

but it will cause the citizens to lose faith in the Aldermen. He asked them to vote to eliminate the downtown core. Chair Moran thanked him.

Mr. Michael Poulos of 1416 Hinman, a 3rd generation downtown Evanston resident and business owner, said a great deal of work has gone into the plan and there are a number of great ideas but he sees it ultimately as a clamor for more high rises, which comes from the developers, not from the people. He said we must consider what kind of town we want to be and he thinks we want mid rise buildings that serve a wide variety of purposes. He said it appears almost as if economic development is fueled by construction. He has made the observation that what has been responsible for revitalizing downtown Evanston, has been liquor. When he was young, it was a vibrant downtown: there were headquarters of many multi-national companies and organizations and his father built the Red Knight Inn and the North Shore Hotel, which was nationally known, but you couldn't bring people into Evanston for anything other than business. We lost our businesses due to bad judgments, high taxes and other reasons unknown. Eventually we developed a restaurant industry which created a more vibrant downtown, but we didn't need high rises to do this, because the quality of our downtown is not based on the height of our buildings, but on the good solid businesses inside of them. He said we have made a lot of mistakes over time, for instance, he represented a home improvement business that wanted to move into downtown Evanston and because of the zoning nightmare they had to go through at the time, which has been improved since then, they gave up and left. He said we have remedied many of our problems and are bringing businesses into Evanston but we don't need buildings that are 30-40 stories high to do that. It is his opinion that we should be limiting any kind of highrise development to west of the CTA tracks and even at that point, they should be limited to about 20 stories. He said one issue about density is that you may have a 2, 5 or 10 story building, you have a mix of heights which do not cause a canyon downtown feel, but he does not see how we will be able to regulate that if we just start letting highrises get built because if you build one on one third of a block then why can't you build one on the next third and the next third and the next thing you know the whole block is high rises and then they will be built across the street. It is a slippery slope and the only way to stop it is to just say no. We have to put an end to the tall building and stick to a more modest height that keeps our community what it is. Then we need to look at how we can attract businesses into Evanston that will really provide a benefit, just as we did with regard to restaurants.

Mr. Poulos said we talk about how more condos will bring in more revenue, but there are only a certain amount of condo dollars chasing condos in Evanston. If we build more condos, we adversely affect the value of the ones that are already here. He suggested that there is not a dollar for dollar ratio: if you build another million dollars of condos you get another million dollars of real estate valuation. It depresses values elsewhere in the town and it reduces overall. Maybe we get some tax benefit, but not as much as people think. He feels that argument must be reconsidered.

He agrees about 708 Church Street being designed to make it possible to put up a structure that has evoked so much public opposition and just find another way to get it done. He hopes that through deliberations the Committee will not carve out a special block for an extra high building and believes that would be a serious mistake.

He believes the public benefits required for bonuses should just be written into the law as required for all buildings: if a green building is a good thing, then amend the building code so that all buildings must be green. He does not see why we should let developers build a higher one if their building is green. If affordable housing is a good thing, then determine the level of affordable housing that should be required, and simply require it.

Mr. Poulos said regarding public transit that although he realizes that is the politically correct view of the world today, people need their cars. He said if we want to build a town that is reliant on the CTA and Metra, remember that not more than a few months ago CTA said they will have to cut back on service. The reality is people tend to take public transit only if it is very convenient. If they want to go to Old Orchard to shop, public transportation won't do it: this is a nation that drives. He said if we put more density in downtown we will clog our roads, as even now, at rush hour it is crowded. He said it is even worse a few towns west and recommends we try to keep it that way, by keeping density down.

Mr. Poulos concluded that we have a good thing going here. He said "Let's not kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Let's just try to polish up that golden egg and make it better." Chair Moran thanked him.

Mr. Andrew McGonigle, of 2526 Princeton and a 19 year resident who works at Northwestern University, commended the work of the consultants and the Plan Commission. He said he has attended 98% of the meetings and has seen tremendous input and a tremendous effort to accommodate everyone. He said at the presentation of the plan on October 15, 2008 there were certain omissions in the plan regarding the Downtown II area relating to the research park and that staff promised to work with the consultants to make sure the uses outlined in the current research park were maintained within that zone. He also said regarding the RD1 area, which is the area on either side of Orrington where it abuts Clark St., that the Orrington Hotel is downzoned in the current document by approximately 1 to 1.5 floors. This concerns him and the other building around the Burger King is smaller than currently exists. He asked that the Committee look at including it to the current level that it is zoned at now. Chair Moran thanked him.

Ms. Chris Westerberg of 525 Grove said she was impressed at how the new plan has tried to provide for a balance in the need for economic opportunities as well as the need to address and respect the physical scale that is very special to Evanston, which is not easy. While there are many things that people will want to change, she thinks the plan has taken the task on responsibly and has done a good job. She said her concern is about preserving context, particularly in transitional zones. She is a resident of the east edge and opposed the 18 story Optima development proposed for 1515 Chicago Ave. She said she is encouraged that the plan recognized that height and density need to decrease in the edge zones as they transition from the core to the residential areas, however the height limits proposed vary so they are set at 8 stories with benefits but at the north and northwest edges they're set at 15 and 10 respectively and at the east edge they are set at 10 stories. She said this inconsistency does not make a lot of sense to some of those who have followed the planning process. She said the east edge in particular transitions quickly to single family homes as well as the lake front. There is an existing context of 8 story buildings, which would seem to argue for a limit of 8 stories here. She believes the plan should be revised with guidelines that consistently provide for more open space and light and less density as the transition is made and that it is crucial in preserving the character, scale and context that make Evanston a unique community and a worthwhile investment, even in difficult economic times. Chair Moran thanked her for her comments.

Ms. Holly Reynolds of 204 Davis Street said the transitional areas play an extremely important role and it seems logical that they all be the same. She said Emerson Street might be an exception but 15 stories are well higher than is appropriate or necessary there. On the east, she doesn't understand why it has been made higher than the west and the south and it seems to her incongruous and unnecessary. She said if 500 Davis has played a part in that, it is widely accepted today as a mistake and a direction we don't want to go. She said the plan has provided for lots of development and she finds no compelling reason why we need greater height in the

eastern transitional zone and it seems that having the transitional zones the same on every side allows them to serve their purpose, which is important.

Ms. Reynolds concluded that we have heard a lot of very thoughtful and interesting comments about ways to keep the city something that we all love, other than brute height, which is the thing communities often fall back on. She said the commentary shows that people have given a lot of thought to this, as she knows the Committee and the Plan Commission have, and it is important we incorporate these thoughts into the plan. She said Evanston has things that communities all over this country are striving to achieve. She said we have it and we've had it for a long time and we have it to lose and she believes we ought to keep that well in mind as we design this plan.

Chair Moran thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He said the Committee is impressed with everyone's commitment by coming tonight and the many other nights there have been hearings on this plan. He said they appreciate their input and passion and they look forward to the next meetings to discuss, debate and hopefully decide on a new downtown plan.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bobbie Newman