

**Planning & Development Committee
Special Meeting
Minutes of May 10, 2007
Room 2200 – 7:30 p.m.
Evanston Civic Center**

Alderman Present: D. Holmes, L. Jean-Baptiste, E. Tisdahl, C. Wollin, M. Wynne

Staff Present: J. Wolinski, J. Aiello, K. Cox, B. Dunkley, D. Marino, T. Norfleet, C. Ruiz, A. Stewart, J. Brownlee

Alderman Absent: S. Bernstein, A. Hansen, E. Moran

Presiding Official: Alderman Tisdahl

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Tisdahl called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(P1) Sidewalk Café for (1) Type 1 Restaurant

The application is for Kansaku Restaurant which is a new type 1 restaurant downtown Evanston, therefore requiring their request for a sidewalk café to come before the P&D Committee. Chair Tisdahl recognized the owners of the restaurant who assured that they have been made aware of the sidewalk café regulations and litter plan and are prepared to abide by all the requirements. Ald. Wollin added to make sure that there is always a 6' clearance on the sidewalk for pedestrian traffic.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste moved approval, seconded by Ald. Wynne. The vote was 6-0 in favor of the motion.

(P2) Ordinance 53-O-07 – Special Use Request for 1723 Benson Avenue

Mr. Murray said that he is representing the applicant, Mr. Ben Kadish on behalf of the Evanston Benson Limited Partnership who are proposing the expansion of the Evanston Athletic Club.

Ald. Wollin moved approval, seconded by Ald. Wynne.

Mr. Wolinski pointed out that there is an issue which hopefully will be taken care of as far as Illinois Accessibility Code on this site. He stated for the record that Mr. Brian Barnes, City of Evanston Inclusion Specialist, has reviewed the plan and has approved that it will now meet all the requirements of the Illinois Accessibility Code, therefore this is a positive from that effect. Also this needs to be completed when the construction is done. Mr. Murray assured that schedules will be submitted in accordance with the guidelines and requirements of the City Departments involved.

Chair Tisdahl and Ald. Wynne disclosed that they are members of the Evanston Athletic Club. Ald. Jean-Baptiste reassured that if they are both paying dues, there is no call to refrain from voting on this matter.

The vote was 6-0 in favor of the motion.

(P3) Ordinance 54-O-07 – Special Use for 1613-1615 Benson Avenue

Chair Tisdahl acknowledged the two applicants in attendance, Mr. Iman Azad and John Clifford. The request is for a smoothie bar inside the new GNC Store location.

Ald. Wollin moved approval, seconded by Ald. Wynne. The vote was 6-0 in favor of the motion.

Mr. Wolinski introduced the new Zoning Administrator, Mr. Bill Dunkley. He stated that Mr. Dunkley comes to us from the City of Atlanta where he was a Senior Planner and was involved in a number of zoning re-districting plans. Mr. Dunkley has a Bio-Electrical Engineering degree from Harvard, an MBA from Columbia University and a Masters in City Planning from Georgia Tech University. He has done several changes in professions, from an IT Project Manager for Oracel for 10 years, and then decided to get involved with City Planning. Mr. Wolinski said that he and fellow department members are glad to have him on board. The P&D Committee welcomed Mr. Dunkley.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Staff Recommendation of Consultant for Downtown Planning Service

Mr. Dennis Marino opened discussion by noting that this is the staff recommendation for hiring a team of consultants to work with City staff on the downtown planning initiative. He noted the consultant team of Duncan Associates; in attendance Mr. Kirk Bishop and Ms. Marya Morris; and Mr. John LaMotte, from the Lakota Group. The other firms involved in the team are 180 Design Studio who are experts in form-based coding and physical planning, Goodman Williams which is located in this region and they are a real estate consulting firm, and KLOA which is a traffic and parking consultant firm that has done a lot of work in Evanston and the entire region as well. Mr. Marino said that under “Summary of Item” on the Agenda Item Summary Sheet, they had the six major outcomes of this project or the scope of work which includes: 1) Preparation of a revised Downtown Plan (the existing plan is approximately 18-years old); 2) Recommendations for downtown zoning; 3) Updated downtown real estate market study (office, residential and retail); 4) Field survey and analysis of utilization of required parking in multi-family developments constructed since 2000; 5) Preparation and testing of a form based code for a pilot area in the downtown; and 6) Facilitation of a public input process.

Mr. Marino turned the presentation over to Ms. Aiello at this point and she will state the need for this project from the staff perspective.

Ms. Aiello stated that staff believes strongly that it is important that they engage a consultant to move our planning along in downtown. She noted that downtown is the economic engine of the community and the planning and zoning has really been the heart and soul of how the City of Evanston has gotten to where they are right now. Staff believes that to move this effort forward for the next 20+ years they really need to have a plan that is at the core based on some sound principles of planning and zoning. She acknowledged that this plan is an update of the 1989 Downtown Plan and in that plan the City set out some pretty ambitious goals as it related to the over-arching goal of creating a 24/7 downtown. Ms. Aiello prided in saying that most people would agree that the City has achieved that goal and the vast majority of all the ones that were outlined in that 1989 Plan. From this point, she feels they really need to keep the downtown vital and the economic engine going, however there additional circumstances to consider, such as is the downtown becoming the “new” residential area, is it the heart and soul of retail, or is it going

to become the new commercial engine. She said all these components need to be taken into consideration as the process and then map out the future. Ms. Aiello stated that as they went through the selection process for the consultant, staff really believes that this consultant team genuinely understood what is being requested and presented the strongest and broadest scope for the City.

Ms. Aiello said that selecting the consulting services was the next processes that staff has been going through since the onset several years ago when they had a small stakeholders visioning session where they began identifying what some of those issues are. Staff then forwarded these issues to the Plan Commission who began their process, forming a subcommittee that has been working on this project ever since. One of the first issues in question is “where are the City’s downtown boundaries?” Secondly, the subcommittee looked at what they would like to see in the downtown and what they want to do with the downtown area; really identify some areas that need further discussion and consideration. Also, there is a need to determine the actual “core” of downtown and what’s the transition and what are those blocks that make Evanston unique in the downtown area. Ms. Aiello recognized the Preservation Commission’s assistance with a recent assessment of the buildings in downtown and identified those buildings that are not landmarks now, but really have that opportunity to be landmarks and create character in the downtown area that they continue to hear from the residents. This planning process will allow the City to have that broad base discussion lead by the Council and really have the opportunity for all the people in the community and each of the wards, not just the new residents of downtown, to be part of this process because part of the strength of this team is the public process. Ms. Aiello said these are some of the main reasons for choosing this consulting team because they knew up front that the downtown area belongs to all the residents of Evanston and one of their first goals is to reach out to the different neighborhoods and wards for their input into this process.

Ms. Aiello concluded that staff strongly recommends the proposed consultant team headed by Duncan Associates. There are lots of new uses in downtown Evanston and each of those needs to be examined. Staff believes the process that the consultants are recommending really addresses all the areas that need to be studied. The consultants have a very aggressive schedule that staff has laid out for them which they have agreed to. Ms. Aiello said not only is it important to have public involvement in this process, but it is also very important that Council lead this with the input from the community.

Mr. Marino acknowledged members of the Plan Commission, Chair Jim Woods, and Mr. Larry Widmayer, Chair of the Downtown Subcommittee. They will be talking about how this scope of services would be very important in helping them with their work and the City’s work overall. Also, Mr. Widmayer will walk us through the guiding principles, which the P&D Committee has a working draft copy of in the packets.

Mr. Woods talked about the last Downtown Plan which was developed in 1989. He noted there were many issues that the downtown area faced at that time in terms of vacancy rates of retail, lack of entertainment and livelihood, etc. Since then that downtown plan with its vision of creating the 24/7 downtown and the efforts of City Council and various commissions, they have really made some dramatic improvements to the downtown area. He said now after having accomplished many of the goals of that 1989 plan, they are now at the point of needing to look ahead to the future. The Plan Commission as well as many other groups in the City saw this as they were reviewing plans over the last few years and it seemed like economic conditions giving them an opportunity for a brief pause now to give the City time to revisit the downtown plan. With this in mind, last fall the Plan Commission created a Downtown Plan Committee to take a

look at what the new vision should be, how maybe it should be structured, look at the unique things in the Zoning Ordinance in terms of what everyone assumes as being a “wedding cake” zoning to downtown. He noted the involvement of the public in the process is very important, as mentioned before and they have all heard the presentation on form-base code and there was a lot of interest in this that would be a new zoning process for Evanston, which demands a fresh look at re-creating the zoning aspects of downtown. Mr. Woods stated that as the Plan Commission examined revising the downtown plan, they determined that it was really necessary to involve a consultant to help facilitate the process and to look at many of the technical aspects as well. The Plan Commission then established some framework for the City’s needs to get the consultants on board to begin their work. As Ms. Aiello mentioned earlier, it was determined last fall to speed things up from the original timeframe for completion of this project by the end of this calendar year which the consultants become even more valuable in that process. Mr. Woods turned the presentation over to Mr. Widmayer who will give an overview of the Downtown Plan Committee’s work.

Mr. Widmayer said if you look at the plans that are going on right now on the West Side of Evanston and look at the plans that were developed in 1989 for downtown, they are both plans aimed at taking an area that needs a lot of help in several ways. The question is how do we give it that boost of energy and get it going. He said when you look at downtown Evanston today; it is a very different world from 1989. Evanston has a very successful core downtown which seems to be working very well. He noted that as they have gone through a number of Planned Developments, the Plan Commission have heard many exciting projects and a number of concerns from neighborhoods around the downtown. He noted that they have talked to Alderman who have expressed similar types of concerns and excitement at the same time. Therefore, when the Plan Commission took a look at this, they felt the need to take a whole new look at the downtown as it is today as the base and consider what needs are necessary for future growth and stability.

Mr. Widmayer said the Plan Commission decided the downtown today is really divided into three distinct natures:

- The Downtown Core which is where most of the dynamic development is going on and is balanced to a large degree by traditional areas.
- Traditional Areas. These are areas where the product was built in the 1910’s and 1920’s. Examples of this include Davis Street west of the tracks, areas of Sherman, and areas of Davis Street going east. The typical building is 3-stories and has retail to the sidewalks, largely storefront environment. He said the Plan Commission believes these buildings in the noted area add a character balance to the dynamics of the growing area.
- Transitional Areas is the third segment. Mr. Widmayer pointed out that somehow back in the 1989 Plan, the area that allowed the largest and tallest growth if residential, was on the perimeter of downtown. He noted that no one has been happy with this concept. Therefore, as they look at the transitional area today, you are looking at an area that will take you from the core downtown to the residential areas around it. We are looking at something with a limited height and maybe a limited capability to go beyond that height, which will probably be in sync with the larger buildings that are close to an R6 height requirement.

Mr. Widmayer said that now they have defined these three areas, the next thing the Plan Commission looked at, which is where the interest came in form-based code, was to not look at

individual projects anymore, but in some context with its surrounding environment. He pointed out especially in the traditional area where they believe to maintain the look and feel of what is there today. This is not to say they don't want any new construction in that area but do want any new construction to stay in sync with the architecture and character of what's existing. Even as we get into the transitional area, the Plan Commission gets more and more concerned about a project being in context with everything surrounding the site.

Mr. Widmayer stated that when looking at the guidelines they talk about form-based code; strongly desired in some areas and other areas considering some form of form-based help that gives them a contextual look. This allows them to look at the zoning for a project in terms of height, density, placement on the site, maybe landscaping and things of this nature without having to go through a planned development process because now the project would be coming into part of a zone. He pointed out this would cut down on some of the overhead on staff, various City boards and even City Council, also allowing developers and applicants to come in and make some changes with a clearer vision.

Mr. Widmayer concluded that the Plan commission is very concerned with preserving certainly the downtown historic landmarks that contribute to the character of downtown, providing incentives for adaptive reuse as well as teardown and development. The Plan Commission is also very concerned about the collaborative effort amongst stakeholders which is another very important aspect in the downtown planning process. Stakeholders include retail, commercial property owners, companies that rent office space, and residents including homeowners and renters. Mr. Widmayer recalled that just a few years ago there was an abundance of vacant storefronts and the City has caught on as a commerce center for creative types of businesses including advertising, design, public relations, and investments, which has resulted in a much less number of vacancies downtown. In closing, he requested that the P&D Committee support this request for approval of the contract for consulting services for the Downtown Planning to be headed by Duncan Associates and their supporting team. The concept has been presented and direction forwarded to this consultant who have responded wholeheartedly. The Plan Commission is confident in the expertise of Duncan Associates and the Lakota Group as well as the other team members for their assistance to expedite the development of a plan to bring before Council that meets these guiding principals.

Mr. Marino at this point turned the presentation over to Mr. Kirk Bishop from Duncan Associates to give their presentation of the scope of work and their methods. Following the consultants presentation, he requests the P&D to hold their questions and comments until that time. He acknowledged Mr. Bishop as a principal with Duncan Associates which is a nationally known planning, zoning and land use firm. They worked in many Cities around the Country at many different levels; also working with different levels of government including several City Councils, Plan Commissions and other City boards. Duncan Associates has also worked closely with citizens, business people and developers as well, so they are very much into working with a wide variety of people and sources to achieve a common objective. Mr. Marino also pointed out that this firm is also known for promoting developments, shaping developments and engaging in smart growth and finding the tools that need to be implemented to make that happen. He reiterated staff's support and recommendation for Duncan Associates as the consultant to head the downtown planning process.

Mr. Bishop introduced himself before the P&D Committee and noted he represents the entire Duncan team. In attendance with him, he first introduced Mr. John LaMotte from the Lakota Group and Ms. Marya Morris from Duncan Associates. He summarized the outline of his

presentation beginning with 1) Introducing the project team and giving background on each company, 2) a summary of the team's approach to this project and experience to follow through, 3) a summary of their understanding of what the project will entail, 4) An overview of the teams strengths and assurance to provide the City with a working plan for the downtown area, and 5) lastly to respond to any questions that the P&D committee might have. (A copy of the slide presentation is attached as "Exhibit A".)

Mr. Bishop acknowledged the project team which is headed by his consultant firm of Duncan Associates. The principals from his firm consist of himself, Tom Smith, Marya Morris, and Eric Damian Kelly. His company will provide the zoning, planning and downtown development issues from the combination of reviews, analysis and gathering information of the other team members to bring together in the form of a final report and presentation for a proposed downtown plan. Duncan Associates also provides legal representation from Eric Damien Kelly for advising purposes. The Lakota Group's will take charge of the area of downtown plan update effort lead by John LaMotte and assisted by Scott Freres and Daniel Grove. The Lakota Group has a fair amount of experience here in Evanston, most recently with the Central Street planning project and in the recent past assisted the City of Evanston and Evmark in a downtown visioning process which provided valuable framework for this project. Mr. Bishop acknowledged the other team members being the 180 Design Studio is the only non-local team member; their company is based out of Kansas City. 180 Design Studio is a firm largely comprised of architects and they will take a key role in leading the design charrette that will provide such an important foundation for the form-based code zoning related work but also will provide some of the more detailed urban design recommendations for the downtown plan work that Lakota will be leading. Mr. Bishop acknowledged the team member of Goodman Williams Group which is a real estate consultant firm based here in the Chicago land area. Their principals are Ms. Linda Goodman and Ms. Christine Williams. This company specializes in doing analysis of the real estate market at all aspects and levels including residential, retail, commercial, industrial, etc. Lastly, another Chicago area based company expertising in transportation/parking analysis is the KLOA Inc. Group with the key principal being Tim Deron.

Mr. Bishop proceeded with the presentation focusing on experience represented by Duncan Associates and their fellow team companies. Involved in the realm of expertise is zoning, planning, design and form-based codes at a highly experienced level and are confident that their team can meet the needs of the City in the requested timeframe given for completion of a final report of the downtown plan. He noted that the team, in various capacities, has worked with large Cities including Chicago, Portland, OR; Austin, TX, Seattle, WA, Pittsburg, PA, Kansas City, KS and other large municipalities. He referred to the map indicating a vast number of cities throughout the Unites States that they have worked with. He went further in detail on the teams zoning experience work and gave a report of their Chicago area planning experience, design guideline experience and form-based code experience.

Mr. Bishop gave a brief overview of Lakota's relevant experience in providing numerous large Cities and municipalities with their planning studies and subsequent guidelines. Several studies were presented relating to Lakota's relevant extensive experience in working with local communities on their master plans and revitalization process. Such cities and municipalities include the City of Chicago, Palatine, Park Ridge, Glenview, and South Bend, IN.

Mr. Bishop moved on to an overview of the consultant teams approach and planning methods to be followed at a very intense pace and timeframe. The approach method involves background/context initiative to start, moving on to developing a downtown plan, a design

charrette and zoning implementation recommendation for the downtown area. He gave a final overview of the teams' strengths including: 1) the team's local and national experience and achievement record, 2) multi-disciplinary guidelines for planning, design, architecture, legal, transportation, marketing and economic growth, and zoning analysis.

Mr. Marino clarified the issue of considering the form-based code zoning concept. Staff, the Plan Commission members, and the consultant team members agree that this form-based code concept might be successful for specific areas of the downtown which are referred to as pilot areas, specifically in the transitional and traditional areas. 180 Design studio as well as the Lakota Group brings a wealth of design guideline experience to the table that sort of takes the basic urban design principals and kicks it up a notch as it gets closer to architectural controls, which is a valuable experience tool provided by this consultant team.

In closing, Mr. Bishop concluded that first and foremost this is a strategic and important update of the 18-year old Downtown Plan adopted in 1989. The consultant team has a "leg-up" on some of the work that they do because of the important work that the Downtown Plan Committee and the Plan Commission, even Council members, that will weigh in on in the form of the guiding principals that Mr. Widmayer explained previously. He stressed that they will be looking to carry those guiding principals to the next level and work down to a more specific plan with the types of practices, planning policies, design guidelines, and zoning controls that can make these guiding principals become a reality.

Mr. Marino clarified the form-based code pilot project zoning considerations that have been discussed and looked at for the downtown area is basically a test simulation. He stressed that this is not presumed that this is the appropriate form of zoning for the downtown. He recalled from the workshop that many of the Council members attended last August, that form-based codes were of great interest to many people, but overall the emphasis here is very much on physical planning including form-based coding; certainly not restricted to that. Secondly, one of the reasons the City selected this consultant team is because of their experience with a variety of downtown planning efforts and their ability to not only deal with the scope of work in a linear way in terms of a downtown plan or downtown zoning recommendations, but also to address emerging projects which can commonly come up during planning processes. Staff felt the depth and range of the team was particularly important for being able to do this and to help the City with those emerging projects that are proposed during a planning process like this.

Ald. Wynne asked how long the test simulation is expected to be and Ald. Jean-Baptiste raised the question of what happens after this trial period. Mr. Bishop responded that this procedure will provide something for visualization and they will work out a reasonable time frame for the pilot area test simulations. Ald. Rainey asked if the test simulation will address any new development that might arise. She feels people involved will only want short buildings, therefore what about the Fountain Square proposal that is coming forward with their concept review. Mr. Bishop responded that the guidelines can be designed to support various building heights and planned development sizes.

Discussion followed regarding the public process. Ald. Rainey stressed that this public input process will have to go way beyond just the downtown area and immediate surrounding neighborhoods because, as it was said earlier, the downtown belongs to all Evanston residents. She said citizens visiting Evanston and patronizing our entertainment and food venues should somehow be included as well as they contribute a lot to the downtown economics. Mr. Bishop assured that they will do an extensive public outreach effort including several charrettes with all

the different neighborhoods throughout Evanston to receive as much community input as possible. Ms. Aiello added that this effort should be a joint effort by the consultants, staff and the Council members. She said that Alderman could arrange meetings within their separate wards for the consultants. She stressed that Alderman have the job to do of getting information out to their constituents along with staff using all their public relation opportunities.

Ald. Holmes does not understand how projects can still go through while this process is underway. She feels since the consultants are working under such an extensive timeframe schedule, it would not be asking too much to put a hold on any new development while the planning process is being done. Ald. Wollin agreed and feels such a moratorium would move things forward immediately. Mr. LaMotte stated that they are very ready to move forward, however it is up to the public officials to lead the way. He assured that they can still proceed and finish within the expected timeframe even while any new development proposals might come up. Mr. Marino informed the Committee members that the new timeframe is a desire to conclude by the end of October, 2007.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste questioned why they are doing this now because there does not appear to be anything out of sync in the downtown area; why fix what is not broken? Mr. Aiello responded that the reason it is time to revise the downtown plan is because they have nearly completed every principle from the 1989 downtown plan. Therefore they need to stay a step ahead and plan for the future. She said the City needs to have a plan in motion instead of letting the market dictate where and how the City either grows, stagnates, or starts to decline. Ald. Jean-Baptiste feels that the market dictation is the dynamics of the downtown development and the subsequent growth and stability. He does not feel a criteria "bubble" for downtown will work. He also stressed the importance of remembering who the downtown is for; it is not just for Evanston residents only. Evanston has become a very unique North shore community with a large number of Chicago area communities visiting and coming into the downtown Evanston area every day. All the P&D Committee members agreed, but also agreed to start with reaching out the all the Evanston communities first. Ald. Wynne said that the consultants can start immediately with attending her ward meeting on May 31st. She questioned how the consultants will keep people up to date and bring the entire community charrette to work together? Mr. Bishop gave a brief summary of their methods and approach tactics. She also noted a concern with the community expressing their feelings that the Council does not have their hands on the steering wheel; therefore she requested that staff keep the Council well informed of every phase during the planning process.

Ald. Rainey said that she is very much in support of this process for the transitional area and the perimeters of the downtown area. She feels the downtown area today is very impressive and knows that many outside citizens visit and come to Evanston for shopping, dining, and entertainment. She said no one should be so eager to bash or change the development process in downtown because it is working. She strongly feels a moratorium would only hurt downtown development and wanted it noted that under no means would she ever support a moratorium for this area.

Ald. Holmes clarified that she too supports development in the downtown area, however the period and time frame expressed for this planning process is not very long. She suggested that another alternative is for staff to share this process with any new developers as they come in during this process. All involved, staff, the consultants, and P&D Committee members were in agreement with this suggestion.

Ald. Wynne motioned for recommendation that A&PW approve this contract on May 14, 2007. Ald. Wynne seconded the motion and the vote was 6-0 in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline E. Brownlee