

TO: The Sycamore Plan Commission

FROM: Bill Nicklas  
City Manager

DATE: February 7, 2007

RE: February 12, 2007 Plan Commission Meeting

The Plan Commission agenda has five action items and one workshop item.

## **I Action Items**

### **A. Consideration of a Proposed Amendment to Section 6.8.4, “Prohibited Signs,” of the Unified Development Ordinance of the City of Sycamore, Illinois.**

On January 15, the City Council’s Ordinance Committee recommended some changes to the sign provisions of the Unified Development Ordinance (“UDO”). Specifically, the committee—and the Council in general—are concerned that the parameters for illuminated electronic signs, as defined in Section 6.8.4 of the UDO, and not sufficiently restrictive to prevent some aesthetic and safety issues. In recent months, a number of scrolling electronic signs have been installed in commercial districts. Though legal under the current UDO sign regulations, their very colorful and eye-catching electronic features have exceeded the expectations of many observers and have raised anxiety that certain commercial areas—especially the central business district—might gradually drift toward an uncharacteristic and crass “Coney Island” look as more electronic signs are installed.

The provisions of the UDO may be amended by the City Council from time to time, but only after a public hearing has been held and a recommendation has been made by the Plan Commission. Accordingly, the Council respectfully requests the Commission’s review of the following proposed revisions to Section 6.8.4. The proposed revisions concern subsection “A” and are italicized:

**6.8.4. Prohibited Signs.** The following signs shall not be permitted in any zoning district:

- A. *Flashing signs and illuminated electronic message boards.*  
**Explanation:**
1. *In the downtown business district defined in Section 6.7.2,E of this code, electronic message boards are prohibited.*
  2. *In C-1 Neighborhood Business Districts, electronic message boards are prohibited.*
  3. *In C-2 Business Districts [other than the downtown business district referenced in (1), above] and C-3 Highway Business Districts, electronic message boards may show the time, temperature, business hours, and business or public service messages. Such messages may scroll, but may not re-cycle in less than two (2) second intervals. In addition, the background for such print shall not feature simulated fireworks, explosions, flags flying, or other distracting electronic displays. Electronic message boards at or near intersections shall not use red or green colored lettering in order to avoid confusion with traffic control devices.*
- B. Signs which are wholly dependent upon a building for support or mounted on the roof, which project more than six (6) inches above the highest point of a building or roof to which they are attached, unless permitted otherwise, herein.
- C. Signs which constitute a hazard to public health or safety.
- D. Signs displaying obscene, indecent or immoral matter.
- E. Signs mounted on trailers or motor vehicles, provided that signs containing the name, address or business identification of the owner or user and displayed on a motor vehicle in use and portable signs defined herein are exempt from this Section.
- F. Attention-getting devices including, but not limited to, inflatable, moving, rotating or undulating signs, or light beams except as otherwise permitted with a special events permit.
- G. Signs which, by reason of size, location, content, color, or manner of illumination, obstruct the vision of motorists or interfere with the visibility or effectiveness of any traffic sign or control device on public streets.
- H. Signs which make use of words such as "Stop," "Look," "One-Way," "Danger," "Yield," or any similar word, phrase, symbol or light so as to interfere with or confuse pedestrian or vehicular traffic.
- I. Signs displayed within or extended over public right-of-way, except those erected or authorized by a government authority.
- J. Signs which obstruct ingress or egress from any fire escape, door, window, or other exit or entrance.
- K. Advertising, business, or identification signs on light poles of establishments.

- L. Signs painted directly on trees, rocks and fences and other structures or objects, except walls.
- M. Festoon lighting.

A favorable recommendation in behalf of the proposed revisions is requested.

**B. Consideration of a Preliminary Plat for the “Traditions of Sycamore”  
Planned Unit Development (Herst Farm).**

At the last regular Plan Commission meeting, the Commission conducted a workshop on a concept plan from John Hall Homes for the development of the Freda Herst farm on Plank Road. The concept plan was a refinement of a plan that was presented to the Plan Commission on August 14, 2006 and to the City Council on October 16, 2006.

**Background**

The 97.21-acre Freda R. Herst farm was annexed and zoned on September 19, 2005. The farm is located at the northeast corner of Plank Road and Lindgren Road. In the fall of 2005, Freda Herst was not interested in developing her property, but in the context of discussions with City officials concerning the dedication of a realigned Lindgren Road, the impact of such a public improvement on future development of her property naturally arose. Ms. Herst and her counsel, Robert Krupp, petitioned to annex their property to the City of Sycamore and to provide for the realignment of Lindgren Road, with certain additional conditions spelled out in an annexation agreement. Among the additional considerations was an understanding that any future development would be reviewed under the City’s planned unit development regulations as a special use, with all required public hearings pertaining to preliminary plats, final plats, rezonings, etc. This important provision prompted the workshop sessions in August 2006 and January 2007 with John Hall Homes.

**The Proposed Preliminary Plan from John Hall Homes**

The attached preliminary plan and plat present the following key features:

- a) The realignment of Lindgren Road (see review comments below).
- b) Land Uses. To better represent the Comp Plan’s expectations for a mix of commercial and low-intensity commercial uses near the intersection of Lindgren Road and Plank Road, the “C-4” Mixed Use Commercial Business District was suggested by the City staff. This is a change from the August concept plan to conform to the UDO’s stricter guidelines for mixed use developments under the C-4 provisions. All of the proposed “C-1” and “R-3” zoning would be combined in the planned development format as a special use, “C-4” Mixed Use Commercial Business District. Such a zoning designation anticipates planned unit developments designed to accommodate compatible residential and commercial uses on larger tracts of land and to maximize opportunities for orderly economic development. Typical mixed use designs include a core of community facilities (e.g. not-for-profit agency offices, day care centers, etc.) small retail establishments (e.g. corner market,

dry cleaner) and commercial office uses (e.g. dentists, attorneys, etc.) adjacent to, or surrounded by, a variety of housing types including single family attached homes such as townhouses or zero lot line (“courtyard”) single family houses as depicted on the concept plan. In such zoning districts, public or open space to promote public gathering is encouraged, in contrast with utilitarian open space such as stormwater detention ponds or undevelopable areas such as floodplains or wetlands.

- c) Commercial and residential condominiums. In the proposed C-4 zoning area, two-story and three-story buildings will house commercial units on the ground floor with the option of residential or commercial condominiums on the second floor, depending upon market interest. The mixed commercial/residential buildings would have roof profiles to blend with the nearby residential buildings.
- d) Courtyard homes. These units are part of the C-4 zoning area and are adjacent to the commercial uses. As an alternative to townhouse construction, courtyard or “zero lot line” homes are built on smaller lots and feature a courtyard on one side of each unit. This approach departs from the repetition in design and the close living quarters that typify even the most expensive townhouses in our community.
- e) The 4.5-acre townhouse area is left unplatted to await market interest. A future revision of the preliminary plan and plat would be required if and when there is sufficient market demand to warrant such housing, as depicted in the original concept plan of August 2006.
- f) Park space. Park District director David Peek sees the two dedicated parks in Sycamore Creek II, immediately east of the Herst farm, as adequate to the needs of residents in this area. One of the B&B parks, the three-acre Columbia Park, would be directly east of the Herst farm on Des Moines Street. A larger regional park in Sycamore Creek II—the 13.86 acre Washington Park—is just to the north and east of the smaller park. Sycamore Creek II can begin development in 2010. A photocopy of the adjacent portion of the Sycamore Creek development plan is attached to illustrate the proximity of the parks.
- g) Bike Paths. The Commission and City staff have been insistent upon bike path linkages since the 2000 Comp Plan process. In this instance, the regional pathway that is to be built on the south side of Lindgren Road would be linked at Schumaker Way (the main Lindgren Road entrance) to bring a dedicated pathway to the single-family zoning area.

### **Variations**

1. Minimum Yard Setbacks. The neo-traditional look proposed by John Hall Homes introduces a number of features such as alleys and “old-town” frontage looks that conflict with the City’s conventional zoning setback requirements. The

differences between the current code provisions and the developer’s proposals are highlighted in the following tables:

<b>Townhouses (“R-3”)</b>		
	UDO Requirement	Proposed
Front Yard	25’	25’
Corner Side Yard	25’	25’
Side Yard	7’	7’
Rear Yard	30’*	30’
<b>Zero Lot Line Houses (“R-3”)</b>		
	UDO Requirement	Proposed
Front Yard	25’	10’
Corner Side Yard	25’	10’
Side Yard	7’	0’/7’
Rear Yard	30’*	22’
<b>Single Family Detached (“R-1”)</b>		
Front Yard	25’	25’
Corner Side Yard	25’	20’**
Side Yard	10’	7’
Rear Yard	25’	25’

\*20 feet if garage is attached to rear of unit for alley access. Detached garages may be 3 feet from any side or rear lot line.

\*\*If the house has a side-loaded garage, the setback has to be 22 feet so a vehicle parked in the driveway does not encroach upon the sidewalk right-of-way.

2. Minimum Residential Lot Size. The zero lot line or courtyard houses would be unique in Sycamore. They are an alternative to rows of attached housing that have a repetitive look. Zero lot line houses align one building wall on a common lot line and set the opposite building wall off the adjacent lot line by at least the required seven feet in order to create a small courtyard between units. The walls built on the lot lines would have to be designed without windows for fire protection purposes. A depiction of these quaint houses is attached. If this approach is acceptable, a variance from the minimum lot size of 9,000 square feet would be required.

3. Second Floor Residential Condominiums. To permit the introduction of second floor condominiums in a “C-4” zoning district, a variation from the provisions of Table 5.3.1 of the UDO would have to be granted to allow such uses by right. Presently, second floor residential uses above ground floor commercial uses are only allowed in the “C-2” Central Business District.

4. Building Height. To permit a third floor residential loft in the “C-4” zoning area, the developer requests a variance from the building height limit of 35 feet to permit a height of 45 height. This would also accommodate the unique cupolas and roof lines illustrated in the developer’s three-dimensional renderings.

5. C-4 Uses. The developer proposes additional commercial uses that might qualify as “neighborhood” commercial uses in the “C-4” zoning area. From the staff perspective, the commercial uses in the table that follows approximate

permitted uses identified in “C-1” or “C-4” districts. The developer asks that the Commission also consider the commercial uses identified in an attachment to this agenda item.

Type of Commercial Use	Permitted	Special Use
Veterinary Clinic		S
Financial service/counseling office	P	
Insurance agency office	P	
Bakery shop	P	
Delicatessen	P	
Package liquor store		S
Butcher shop	P	
Accountant office	P	
Attorney office	P	
ATM kiosk	P	
Barber shop	P	
Beauty parlor/hair salon	P	
Business office	P	
Dental clinic	P	
Medical clinic	P	
Commercial mailing service	P	
Day spa	P	
Physician’s office	P	
Engineering service office	P	
Dry cleaner	P	
Locksmith office	P	
Licensed massage therapy	P	
Management services	P	
Optician’s office	P	
Printing (xerographic) services	P	
Shoe repair shop	P	
Tailor shop	P	
Tanning salon	P	
Tax preparation services	P	
Health club		S
Recreation equipment showroom	P	
Art gallery	P	
Book store	P	
Camera/photographic sales & supplies	P	
Clothing store	P	
Gift shop	P	
Stationery/greeting card store	P	
Office Supply Store (2,500 sf or less)	P	
Bicycle shop/rentals	P	
Bed & Breakfast Inn	P	

6. The “40%” rule. In the descriptive language concerning “C-4” Mixed Use developments in Section 6.5.2 of the UDO, there is an expectation that the commercial uses “shall not be greater in area than forty (40) percent of the planned mixed use development.” With respect to the overall site plan, the designated neighborhood commercial area comprises 15% of the overall site (14.62 of the overall 97.21 acres). However, within the “C-4” zoning designation that includes the neighborhood commercial uses as well as the courtyard homes, townhouses, and about one-half of the open space, the commercial uses comprise about 58% of the land area. The developer requests a variance from the 40% rule, because the mix of building types and avenues proposed in the neighborhood commercial area requires slightly more land area to establish than “boxes” of a more conventional design.

**Phasing and Zoning**

In terms of the pace of any residential permits, the applicable regulatory framework is Ordinance 2003.65 (Ordinance 2005.60 was not approved until November of 2005). According to Ordinance 2003.65, building permits for residential construction may be issued annually as follows:

Number of Dwelling Units on the Preliminary Plan	Dwelling Units Permitted Per Year as a Percentage of the Total Lots on The Preliminary Plan	Time Limit Before New Building Permits Are Issued Following Annexation
0 to 50 dwelling units	No Limit	No Time Limit
51 to 100 dwelling units	No More than 35 per Year	One Year
101 to 200 dwelling units	25% or 40, whichever is lower	Two Years
201 to 300 dwelling units	20% or 50, whichever is lower	Three Years
301 to 400 dwelling units	18% or 60, whichever is lower	Four Years
401 to 500 dwelling units	15% or 70, whichever is lower	Five Years
Over 500 dwelling units	10% or 75, whichever is lower	Six Years

Ordinance 2003.65 permits the phasing or sequential development of tracts which have less than 100 acres in total area. In this instance, the developer hopes to develop commercial uses simultaneously with the various types of residential units, but the market for the commercial uses may not evolve at the same pace as the demand for the residential units. Accordingly, the developer proposes two phases. The C-4 zoning area constitutes one phase, and the R-1 zoning constitutes another phase. The permitting of the first single family home in the R-1 zoning could occur two years after the date of Council approval.

**Review Comments**

The City staff have shared the following review comments with the developer since receiving the attached preliminary plan and plat:

- Access to the C-4 properties from Lindgren Road should be limited to full access at the National Street intersection, and a right-in only roughly between Plank Road and National Street, on both sides. The right-in options should be reviewed with the County Engineer, with respect to stacking issues and other safety considerations near the intersection with Plank Road.

- The portion of Lindgren Road which will be vacated once the realigned Lindgren Road is constructed can be shown as being incorporated into Lots 305, 306 and 307 with the same C-4 zoning since the approved annexation agreement provided that all of this vacated road would go to the Herst property.
- The alley at the rear of the courtyard homes should be a private alley.
- The green buffer area along Plank Road should be shown as also adjoining the C-4 Lots 300-305.
- The location of the proposed bikepath should be shown.
- Ten feet (10') of additional right-of-way should be shown along the north side of Lindgren Road adjoining Lot 300 for construction of a right turn lane. Also, an additional ten feet (10') of right-of-way should be shown at the radius at Plank Road.
- Setback lines for the C-4 lots should be shown on the plat.
- Street standards for residential collector streets and commercial streets shall conform to the requirements contained in the City's Unified Development Ordinance.
- Since the project is larger than 40 acres, the storm water storage shall be designed using an approved hydrograph method rather than the rational method.

### **Recommendation**

The City staff request a favorable recommendation for the attached plan and plat, including the proposed variations, subject to the changes outlined above.

### **C. Consideration of a Petition from Milan Krpan to Rezone Property Adjoining a Portion of Gateway Drive and Also Adjoining a Portion of Dosen Drive in Sycamore from "M-1" Light Manufacturing District to "C-3" Highway Business District, in Conformance with a Revised Concept Plan.**

At the Sycamore Plan Commission meeting of January 8, the Commission reviewed a concept plan for the zoning of 27.25 acres in the Thanks America subdivision, under development by Mr. Milan Krpan and his family. With the opening of the Oakland Drive Extension to Peace Road via Dosen Drive and Wirsing Parkway, there is renewed commercial and industrial interest in the largely unplatted acres that remain in the Thanks America subdivision. A more comprehensive plan for this subarea's development would be justified by this fact alone. Several other factors contribute to the need for a more orderly plan, namely

- the development interest to the north, represented by the Three Sula commercial subdivision (52 acres and 24 lots annexed in August 2004);
- the recent purchase of the 25-acre Thorald Anderson parcel at the southwest corner of Peace and Bethany Roads by Mr. Krpan;
- the continuing commercial office development in the Prairie Professional Park under development by Dr. Dennis Collins and additional commercial office development along Gateway Drive, east of the Hauser-Ross facility.

Based on suggestions from the Plan Commission and subsequent conversation with the City staff, the attached concept plan and zoning exhibit were prepared for the

Commission's formal review. The concept plan poses a number of zoning considerations:

- Commercial Zoning. Lots 1-4 of the Thanks America Professional Subdivision (surrounding the intersection of Dosen and Gateway Drives) and Lots 1-3 of the Thanks America Commercial Subdivision (on the north side of Oakland Drive), are presently zoned "C-3" Highway Business District. The businesses developing in the Kishwaukee Health Services subdivision are primarily commercial office uses and it is logical that this type of use would continue eastward on Gateway Drive, on both sides, based on the proximity of the new hospital. A rezoning of the lots along the Gateway Drive corridor to "C-3" would be appropriate in this light.
- Industrial Zoning. The City's need for industrial-zoned lots of varying sizes is addressed by retaining the "M-1" zoning of Lots 8-15 and Lot 29. The larger unsubdivided area to the east of these smaller, industrial-zoned parcels gives the developer and the City flexibility in attracting one or more larger industrial users to this industrial park.
- Unincorporated Land. After further conversation between DeKalb and Sycamore officials, the land east of the Com Ed right-of-way would fall to DeKalb upon annexation; the former Thorald Anderson property that lies north and west of the Com Ed right-of-way would fall to Sycamore upon annexation. The entire un-annexed area falls under the revenue-sharing provisions of the Sycamore-DeKalb boundary agreement of 1995.
- The proposed roadway that runs along the west side of the Anderson property and the east side of the Voluntary Action Center would pass through a significantly sloped terrain and would require careful engineering, but would align with a logical entrance to the Ideal property behind the houses on Bethany Road, if re-development of the northwest corner of Peace and Bethany Roads were to occur.

A favorable Plan Commission recommendation on this rezoning proposal depicts on the attached zoning exhibit is requested.

**D. Consideration of a Petition from the City of Sycamore to Annex Certain Park District Property Located on the West Side of Airport Road, South of Illinois Route 64, with a Special Use Permit for Public Park Purposes.**

This item and Item "E," below are essentially "clean-up" items. The Park District owns 77.76 acres south of the present soccer fields and sports facilities and west of Airport Road that has not been annexed. Additionally, as part of the Parkside Estates subdivision approval in August 2001, a five-acre City parcel once targeted as a wastewater treatment site was transferred to the Park District but was not annexed. These two parcels would be annexed and zoned "R-1," One Family Residence District, with a special use for public park purposes.

A favorable Plan Commission recommendation is requested.

**E. Consideration of a Petition from the City of Sycamore to Annex Well Site #9 at 475 South Airport Road and Rezone Said Property to “R-1” One Family Residence District with a Special Use Permit for a Public Water Supply Facility.**

The larger parcel referenced in Item “D,” above, surrounds the 0.92-acre well site recently developed by the City of Sycamore as Well #9 on Airport Road. With the annexation of the larger parcel, the Well site can be annexed. The proposed zoning is “R-1,” One Family Residence District with a special use permit for a public water supply.

A favorable Plan Commission recommendation is requested.

## **II Workshop Items**

**A. Report of the Plat Officer Regarding Approvals in the Period July 1, 2006 Through December 31, 2006.**

City Engineer John Brady, who serves as the City’s plat officer, has forwarded a summary (see attached) of the four plat changes he has approved in the past six months. Plan Commission review is invited.