

TO: The Sycamore Plan Commission

FROM: Bill Nicklas
City Manager

DATE: May 7, 2008

RE: May 12, 2008 Plan Commission Meeting

The Plan Commission agenda has two workshop items.

Workshop Items

A. Consideration of a First Draft of Chapter Four of the Proposed 2008 Comp Plan.

At the regular Plan Commission meeting of January 14, 2008, the Commission reviewed a red-lined version of the 2003 Comp Plan goals which reflected suggestions made by Plan Commission members in November and December of 2007. With the provisional planning goals for the updated Comp Plan in hand, the City Manager undertook the revision of Chapters One and Two, which constitute the historical chapters of the Comp Plan text. The inventory and analysis in these chapters was substantially revised to reflect the planning and socio-economic developments since 2003. Complete copies of Chapters One, Two, and Three were presented for the Commission's careful review and comment on April 21. The minor revisions suggested by the Commission have been incorporated in the chapter texts.

Chapter 4, "Land Use Plan," will be reviewed by the Commission on May 12. The text puts into words what the Future Land Use Map portrays schematically. The Plan Commission had an earlier draft of the Future Land Use Map in hand as it reviewed the Comp Plan goals in January. Now that the Comp Plan process is moving toward a conclusion, the Future Land Use Map is presented for a final review and consideration. The key features of the Map and the companion text are as follows:

1. **Rural Residential.** Within the City's mile-and-a-half planning jurisdiction, 377 acres have been included within the rural residential land use category—about 1768 acres less than in 2003. The acres within this designation that become contiguous with the corporate limits may be annexed incrementally for low-density, estate-sized single family detached homes, with the expectation that such homes will typically be served by municipal water and sewer systems. Any new development should demonstrate compatibility with existing development. Larger

lot sizes or nestled home designs with a gross density of 1 unit per acre or less shall be considered.

2. **Neighborhood Residential.** The Plan directs most new urban residential development to the northcentral and northeast portions of the planning area, but affords some “in-fill” opportunities for residential development. A total of about 690 acres is set aside for neighborhood residential development in the Land Use Plan, based on sewer line capacity and the ability to loop City water mains for the delivery of good quality drinking water. On May 1, 2008 a total of 2,709 acres were zoned residential within the corporate limits.
3. **Commercial.** In the period 2003 to 2008, large land areas designated for commercial development on the east and west sides of Peace Road between IL Route 23 and IL Route 64 were annexed. Two large and un-annexed areas remain open to annexation for highway business purposes: (1) the northeast corner of IL Route 64 and Peace Road and the northeast and southeast corners of Airport Road and IL Route 64. These areas should be developed in a unified fashion rather than in parcel-by-parcel strip developments. The Land Use Plan proposes about 237 acres of commercial land use within the mile-and-a-half development area. About 804 acres of commercially zoned land exists within the present City limits.
4. **Industrial.** In the period 2003 to 2008 two prime areas for industrial development were annexed: roughly sixty (60) acres within the “Thanks America” subdivision that lies west of Peace Road and north of Wirsing Parkway, and a sixty-four acre parcel within the Sycamore Prairie Business Park. The Land Use Plan proposes a total of 335 acres for new industrial development. About 544 acres within the present City limits are zoned industrial.
5. **Office, Research, and Light Industrial.** Three prime areas for “ORI” development include the northwest corner of Illinois Route 64 and Peace Road; the southwest corner of Bethany and Somonauk Roads; and along the south side of Bethany Road between Sycamore Road and Peace Road (adjoining the present Monsanto campus). The land area south of the regional detention pond at the southwest corner of Bethany and Somonauk Roads is on the periphery of the path for the DeKalb Taylor Airport’s northeast runway and would not be suitable for residential uses. A total of 438 acres are proposed for “ORI” development within the primary development area. In May 2008, a total of 43 acres were zoned “ORI” within the corporate limits.
6. **Mixed Use.** The “Mixed Use” designation in the Land Use Plan includes about 244 acres. Guidelines for such areas include the following:
 - Combined storm water detention;
 - Internal roadways for access to individual parcels rather than multiple curb cuts on collector streets;
 - Compatible architecture in terms of bulk, building materials, height, etc.
 - Compatible ground-mounted “monument”-style signage;
 - Extensive landscaped or open space buffers between uses;
 - Extensive parking lot screening especially along peripheral roadways.
 - A restriction of small neighborhood commercial uses to those that do not operate late into the evening.

- Promotion of an interdependency of uses. For example, in Mixed Use-Residential districts, ancillary non-residential uses that primarily serve the neighborhood and nearby subdivisions such as day care centers, schools, corner markets, and dry cleaners would be encouraged.
- Encouragement of sidewalks and bike paths that directly connect the mix of uses.

As of May 2008, a total of 30 acres had been zoned “C-4” Mixed Use within the corporate limits.

7. **Floodplain.** The Plan depicts the flood hazard areas of the City as an overlay district. It is the purpose of the overlay district to discourage uses other than public recreational uses in order to control filling, grading, dredging, and other development that may increase erosion or flood damage. The Plan shows large park acreage within the floodplain on the west side of Airport Road. Most of this land should be retained as natural open space. The Park District Master Plan and the Airport Road Sub Area Plan identify this area as ideal for the development of a passive recreational “green belt” conducive to walking and bike paths.

In the table that follows, the mix of uses designated in the mile-and-a-half area is compared with similar existing uses in the 2000 and 2003 Land Use Plans:

Proposed Land Uses*

Land Use	2000 Plan	%	2003 Plan	%	2008 Plan	%
Neighborhood Residential	4,117	48.20%	3,006	24.17%	690	2.19%
Rural Residential	0	0.00%	2,145	17.24%	377	0.00%
Commercial	504	5.90%	489	3.93%	237	1.40%
Industrial	468	5.48%	290	2.33%	335	2.70%
Office/Research	551	6.45%	670	5.39%	438	2.27%
Mixed Use	199	2.33%	119	0.96%	244	0.81%
Schools	40	0.47%	245	1.97%	0	0.00%
Parks	375	4.39%	375	3.01%	336	1.95%
Green Buffer	0	0.00%	519	4.17%	2227	10.12%
Agricultural	2,287	26.78%	4,581	36.83%	18,152	78.55%
Total	8,541	100.00%	12,439	100.00%	23,036	100.00%

*Excludes Floodplain

Plan Commission direction is requested.

B. Reconsideration of the City’s Urban Design Guidelines for New Residential Construction in Older Neighborhoods.

In October 2001 the City Council approved its first set of Urban Design Guidelines. These guidelines laid out broad expectations for the relationship between buildings and open spaces, the bulk and height of commercial and industrial structures in relation to their nearby residential counterparts, the appearance of public facilities, and the visual impact of our public and private infrastructure. In the 2003 Comp Plan, these guidelines

constitute “Appendix A.” For the proposed 2008 Comp Plan, the City Manager will suggest that such guidelines be incorporated in the body of the Plan text as Chapter 5. A copy of the Guidelines is attached.

The Commission will be asked to review the Urban Design Guidelines for the regular June meeting. As the Commission considers these guidelines, the City Manager will ask for some direction on a topic that would legitimately fit in the residential portion of the guidelines. Specifically, the issue is how to provide reasonable parameters for “tear downs” and redevelopment plans in older neighborhoods. In the past two years, the combination of relatively high new home prices in newer subdivisions, coupled with tighter credit terms, has prompted some local families to consider housing additions, substantial remodeling, or—in a few instances—tear downs of older and smaller homes to be replaced by larger, new homes or multiple housing units, depending on the zoning constraints. This process is not yet a strong trend, and is not unfamiliar to those whose memories extend to the early 1970s or even the early 1980s when housing recessions sprouted a number of less ambitious housing projects such as additions and exterior remodeling. The market economics of such a shift in priorities for local families is not hard to understand. To find more living space or to upgrade older homes for longer use or resale, some families have found it more economical to invest in their older homes and build on existing equity, rather than stretch their family budgets to build a new home. From a planning standpoint, the question of whether some regulatory parameters need to be applied has arisen as some new additions seem to be incompatible with the scale, appearance, and lot layouts of neighboring structures.

For the June 9 meeting, the City Manager will provide the Commission with examples of advisory as well as regulatory standards that other communities have developed to address new residential construction in older neighborhoods.