

**ALGONQUIN DOWNTOWN PLANNING STUDY
STEERING COMMITTEE**

Meeting Minutes

Historic Algonquin Village Hall Second Floor

June 28, 2012

6:00 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 1: **Call to Order**

Present: Debby Sosine, Ed Mudra, Glenn Schilke, John Breugelmans, Tony Bellino, Jim Dawson, Ed Wolowiec, Gabriele Reego, Wade Merritt.

Absent: Richard Worzala, Sally Cope, Howard Brinn.

Consultant Members Present: Ron Lanz, Land Vision; Bridget Lane, Business Districts, Inc.; Stacey Meekins, Sam Schwartz Engineering.

Village Staff Present: Russ Farnum, Community Development Director; Katie Parkhurst, Senior Planner; and Ben Mason, Senior Planner.

AGENDA ITEM 2: **Request Approval of February 23, 2012 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Ed Wolowiec made a motion to approve the February 23, 2012 minutes. Ms. Debby Sosine seconded the motion to approve the minutes as presented. The voice vote noted all ayes and the motion carried.

AGENDA ITEM 3: **Project Update**

Mr. Ron Lanz, Land Vision, explained that a draft of the Existing Conditions Report is being finalized and will be sent out to the Steering Committee soon for review. He mentioned that the study's next step will be the public workshop scheduled for July 19, which will solicit general comment and feedback on downtown and kick-off the second phase of the study.

AGENDA ITEM 4: **Phase 1 Status – Initial Findings & Existing Conditions**

a) Background Data Review and Existing Land Use

Mr. Lanz stated that Land Vision and the project's sub-consultants—Business Districts, Inc. and Sam Schwartz Engineering—have done a comprehensive analysis of the existing conditions downtown, which included in-depth field visits, interviews with downtown businesses, property owners and residents as well as review of current village planning documents and codes. He explained that for purposes of this study, downtown has been divided into four geographic sub-areas (NE, NW, SE, SW) using the intersection of IL Route 31/62 as a center point. Each quadrant was evaluated from multiple perspectives,

including: land use; zoning; physical conditions; as well as wayfinding and business signage. Overall, Mr. Lanz noted that the southeast sub-area features the most diversified mix of uses as it is home to one-half of downtown's commercial uses, numerous historic structures, and extensive open space.

There was general discussion about the background analysis presented. Mr. Ed Mudra suggested the addition of a pedestrian connection between downtown and the commercial district to the south located around Edgewood Drive. Mr. John Breugelmans expressed that certain sections of downtown have more architectural significance than other areas, and that as a whole there are more historically significant structures in the sub-areas south of Algonquin Road. Mr. Glenn Schilke noted that he resides on N. Main Street and takes great pride and care of his property. Mr. Tony Bellino stated an emphasis should be placed on blending the design of new construction into the existing fabric of downtown.

b) Transportation and Mobility Inventory

Ms. Stacey Meekins, Sam Schwartz Engineering, gave an overview of the status of vehicular circulation, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, as well as on-street and off-street parking. She highlighted several main findings, including: significant vehicular traffic on IL Route 62 acts as a physical barrier through downtown; new opportunities to connect the regional Prairie Trail bike path to the central business district; municipal parking lot on S. Harrison Street underutilized and parking counts in downtown demonstrate that overall parking "occupancy" significantly less than existing capacity.

Steering Committee members discussed the results of the mobility inventory. Mr. Wade Merritt recommended connecting downtown to the Prairie Trail bike path via a shared multi-use path. Mr. Bellino noted that Algonquin has a rich history and suggested installing historic plaques on the bike trail to encourage cyclists and pedestrians to visit downtown. Ms. Sosine and Mr. Jim Dawson expressed support for establishing some type of historic walk or plaque program to attract people downtown and showcase Algonquin's history.

c) Real Estate Market Assessment

Ms. Bridget Lane, Business Districts Inc., presented a summary of a real estate market assessment of downtown. She explained the overall goal of capturing a greater share of spending power from within the 5-minute drive time (convenience) trade area of Downtown Algonquin. Ms. Lane noted downtown's core business district currently has the capacity of 150,000 to 200,000 square feet of commercial space and that rather than seek to increase the physical size of the business district, there is a need to make the existing commercial space more economically viable. Specifically, she referenced national per square foot averages of \$15-30 for gross rents and that interviews associated with the study confirmed Downtown Algonquin rents in the \$8-14 range. Ms. Lane also stated that an increase in office uses and daytime employees within the 5-minute drive time to downtown would help attract, for example, a profitable lunch crowd for restaurants.

The Steering Committee commented on the general state of the real estate market in Algonquin and the surrounding area. Ms. Gabriele Reego expressed a need for more retail uses downtown. Mr. Dawson noted that the office vacancy rate is higher in McHenry County than in suburbs closer to Chicago. Mr. Breugelmans mentioned that the lack of a Metra train station in Algonquin is one reason why there are fewer offices.

d) Stakeholder Survey and Interviews

Ms. Lane summarized the results of the online public survey that was conducted during the spring. She explained that there were 480 respondents and some of the main findings included: respondents emphasized a desire for dining with secondary priorities of shopping and entertainment; majority of respondents indicated general preference for single family housing type; traffic congestion significantly shaped respondents' perception of downtown. Mr. Lanz also briefly described the focused outreach process that was undertaken to obtain comments and feedback from individual downtown businesses, property owners and residents and noted that 17 one-on-one interviews were conducted. He noted that land use issues were the most popular topic of discussion and traffic congestion is the primary area concern. A complete summary of the stakeholder surveys and interviews will be included in the study's Existing Conditions Report.

AGENDA ITEM 5: Preliminary Improvement Opportunity Identification

Mr. Lanz reviewed an aerial map of downtown and asked the Steering Committee for preliminary comments and suggestions for redevelopment and improvement opportunities. Suggestions offered by committee members for consideration as part of the planning study included the following:

- Pedestrian linkage from Downtown to Arrowhead Subdivision
- Downtown gateway sign on Rt. 31, north of Western Bypass northern terminus, to direct southbound motorists to Old Town District
- Redevelop northwest corner of Rt. 31/62 with a multi-story mixed-use building
- Maintain a gas station use somewhere in downtown, as a general convenience service
- Remove southbound left-turn restrictions on Rt. 31 at Front and Edward Streets once the Western Bypass project is complete
- Redevelop southeast corner of Rt. 31/62 with a multi-story mixed-use building and consider relocating any existing buildings with architectural significance to another site
- Incorporate a public-art related sculpture into land use redevelopment project, for example, at southeast corner of Rt. 31/62
- Install enhanced pedestrian crossing features along Main Street, such as push-button lighted crosswalks and medians
- Improve alleyways between Main Street and S. Harrison Street for use as pedestrian walkways
- Reduce building setback requirements in residential neighborhoods downtown to allow more opportunity for additions to existing homes and detached garages

- Increase recreational opportunities on the Fox River, such as public piers in Riverfront Park and promotion of canoeing and kayaking south of dam

AGENDA ITEM 6: Project Next Step: July 19 Public Planning Workshop

Mr. Lanz gave a brief overview of the project's upcoming public planning workshop, scheduled for Thursday, July 19 at St. John's Lutheran School. He noted the workshop will include a presentation on the existing conditions downtown, image preference survey, and small group discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Questions

None.

AGENDA ITEM 8: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Benjamin A. Mason". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Benjamin" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Mason".

Benjamin A. Mason, Senior Planner