

Present: Chairperson Jensen; Vice-Chair Ostrowski; Members: Borowski, Freedman, Liberty, Stempien, Tillman and Westerlund

Absent: Wayne

Also Present: Building Official, Byrwa
Council member, Peddie
Planning consultants, Borden and Cramer

Chairperson Jensen called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

APPROVE AGENDA

The agenda was approved as published.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Stempien, second by Ostrowski, that the minutes of a regular Planning Board meeting held on April 23, 2008 be approved as submitted.

Motion passed.

ROBERT GIBBS OF GIBBS PLANNING TO ADDRESS BOARD REGARDING SOUTHFIELD ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY

Jensen introduced Robert Gibbs from Gibbs Planning Group, whose proposal was accepted to conduct a Southfield Road corridor study between Southfield and Beverly Roads. Gibbs commented that the corridor is a typical post-WWII area that boomed in the 1960s and 1970s. It is still a vibrant retail and residential district. Many communities of that era are being redeveloped or infilled because people have decided that these locations are good places in which to live. Beverly Hills is almost considered an inner-ring suburb because Oakland County has spread out past Clarkston. With rising fuel prices, people like moving into these suburbs to live, work, and have a good quality of life. Beverly Hills was developed at a time when town centers were not being built. If the Village was developed in 1929 like Lathrup Village or Birmingham, Beverly Hills would have been planned to include a town square and a commercial district.

Many retailers and restaurant owners have identified communities such as Beverly Hills as a good place to open new stores. Gibbs will be looking at how to redevelop and prepare a long-range plan for the next 20-25 years. He will review the Village's Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan to make recommendations on how they can be modified to facilitate redevelopment.

Gibbs asked Board members for their thoughts on the area and whether they would like to see changes or have the area remain as it is currently. He asked if there are any communities that members think he should use as a model. Gibbs has studied and done research on the area but will not start planning before receiving thoughts and direction from the Planning Board.

Westerlund stated that traffic counts do not warrant five lanes of traffic on Southfield Road. Forward looking direction is needed. He questioned whether there was a way to redevelop with the road as it is and create a storefront on-the-street effect. Westerlund commented that the Village has struggled with the haphazard building along Southfield Road.

Liberty questioned how property owned by business people could be changed. Gibbs responded that it has been his experience that change cannot be enforced on a property owner. He will be contacting property owners. When modifying zoning ordinances, communities are better off leaving the existing zoning in place while offering an optional zone that would provide incentive if a property owner builds to a higher standard.

When the Village Ordinances were written in the 1970s, it was standard to have twice the amount of parking for buildings than is required by newer ordinances. This resulted in property owners with parking lots that are not fully used. Consider can be given to offering property owners a lesser parking standard to redevelop a site to the Village's standard.

Gibbs commented that his firm has done plans where nothing changes for a long time because the property owners are doing well; they have also initiated plans where people apply for the new incentives immediately due to the market conditions.

Federal funding was used to construct Southfield Road in conjunction with the requirement that a road had to be sized to handle traffic 20 years into the future. When Southfield Road was built, it was projected that southeast Michigan was going to go through a huge population boom, which never materialized. The road was sized for a population that has not occurred. Gibbs commented on traffic counts that he has reviewed, noting that traffic counts significantly increase south of 13 Mile Road.

Stempien commented that he would like to see a plan that invoked a sense of arrival or a sense of place. He questioned the process that Gibbs follows to determine a solution.

Gibbs related that his group will come back with two or three alternatives and discuss the pros and cons with the Planning Board. Their process will be to look at traffic counts and the physical layout of the property. He will contact property owners and meet with them if possible. Gibbs will review the Zoning Ordinance and determine if they can arrive at incentives to implement the plan.

Ostrowski would like to see walkable features in the downtown area without changing the overall corridor. The Southfield Road corridor is a common point in the Village that is identified as a middle ground for the east and west parts of the community. He thought that there was the potential to expand the study to include areas north of Beverly Road.

Freedman commented that she would love to see a walkable downtown area. Her concern was with the state of the economy and whether there would be interest in retail shops coming into the community. The current economic conditions should be recognized in the plan.

Gibbs stated that his group specialized in urban retail development. As part of their plan, they will do a five-year market study of what is likely to work in this location. He reiterated that this be a 20-year plan. Hopefully, the economy will rebound within five years.

Gibbs gave examples of developments he has been involved with. It was mentioned that a development called The Village of Rochester Hills was created by tearing down a strip mall to provide shopping in an urban village streetscape of national and local retailers including restaurants, shops, and stores.

Borowski stated that he is interested in seeing what the Gibbs Planning Group will do. He mentioned the challenges on this piece of property, considering the cemetery across the street, Southfield Road, and the private road in the middle of the area. Beverly Hills has taken a big hit as a residential community in this economy. It has a great school system, good infrastructure, and proximity to all of the economic engines. The Planning Board wants to do something to support the residential character of the area in terms of the retail, office, professional, and recreational offerings associated with this corridor.

Jensen listed four items that he thought were critical to the corridor plan. He would like to see a redevelopment design without changing the road, which may be a longer term reality. He would like a component of a town center in the plan. Jensen added that he thought it was critical to have a residential component, where someone could walk to get ten different things they might need. Other Board members agreed that the corridor has all the necessary components; but they are arranged poorly. The corridor needs to be a point of destination.

Gibbs believed that Beverly Hills has all of the land uses it needs for a perfect village: restaurants, book store, grocer, athletic facility, school, multiple family. It would be beneficial for Board members to look at images and provide him with feedback on whether they want the district to stay one story or if they are comfortable with two or three stories.

Jensen expressed the view that, if the design contained the right components, he could not image there being a problem in terms of incentives for change. He asked for a consensus on whether the space should remain one story or whether Board members would consider a plan with two or three-story buildings. Freedman responded that she would have to see the plan before committing to the number of stories. Ostrowski said that three stories would allow the plan to accommodate a parking garage and provide more retail per square footage. Westerlund was interested in the vertical aspect of a plan with one story retail and two stories for a residential component. Gibbs added that a three-story structure can be made to look like a two-story building. He will show the Board images of this.

Gibbs was interested in doing an interim presentation in two or three weeks before the Planning Board and Council to introduce a basic approach and assess how it is received. Gibbs saw his role as being a conduit to give the Village's values and vision a physical form in the private sector. He will illustrate the plan and help the Village write a code, then turn it over to the private sector to have them do what they do.

DISCUSS SITE PLAN REQUIREMENTS FOR 31555 SOUTHFIELD ROAD (BEVERLY HILLS CLUB)

Stephen and Stanley Satovsky were present to discuss site plan requirements for an internal addition to the Beverly Hills Club. They met with the Village building official for a preliminary review of the proposal and were interested in receiving feedback from the Planning Board before submitting a plan for a yoga studio in the mezzanine area of the building. Stephen Satovsky distributed a handout and preliminary site plan to Board members. He emphasized that the footprint of the building will not increase. Total floor square footage will increase less than 1.5% of their total building, or 1080 square feet.

Satovsky asked for direction on three items related to the site plan. Parking calculations for the mixed use building were discussed. Board members received a handout that listed various uses (tennis courts, aerobics studio, swimming pool, basketball, fitness area, yoga studio) and the maximum number of people that could be using each facility at one time in order to calculate parking requirements.

The calculations indicate that there could be 247 people in the club at one time. The ordinance requires one space per three patrons. The number of employees during the busiest shift was considered requiring 24 spaces. Satovsky allowed 13 spaces for people attending physical therapy in the facility. The total requirement would be 120 parking spaces based on his calculations. There are currently 147 spaces including five handicapped spaces. Satovsky is attempting to demonstrate that there is enough parking to accommodate the small studio that they propose to add to the facility. He requested feedback from the Board on whether this analysis is reasonable.

Another issue related to the fact that the plan presented to the Board was drawn in a 1:30 scale as are the adjoining buildings. The Ordinance indicates that plans under 3 acres are to be drawn to a 1:20 scale.

Satovsky questioned whether the Beverly Hills Club would be required to provide a complete landscape plan (Ordinance Section 29) prepared by a landscape architect considering that there are no changes planned for the exterior of the building.

Village planning consultant Brian Borden offered a few general observations, considering that he has not seen these plans prior to today's meeting. He thought that the analysis provided by the applicant relative to parking calculations seemed logical in its approach. The ordinance requirement is based on one space per three patrons. However, the ordinance requires parking spaces to be based on occupancy load, which could effect these calculations. The Village will determine whether the plan complies with current requirements.

Borden did not think the 1:30 scale drawing was an issue as long as plan is accurate and legible. With regard to landscaping, any improvement that triggers a site plan review represents an opportunity to improve site deficiencies. He suggested that any recommendation for an exterior improvement should be in keeping with the scale of the project. The Village would like to see the existing landscaping plan in order to verify whether there are deficiencies.

Borden has observed that parking is tight on this site. It is understood that there are limitations with an existing site, but it should be determined whether there is sufficient parking for the Beverly Hills Club. Satovsky responded that there are peak periods of use when the parking lot is full and other times when there is little use. He noted that their business drops by about 40% in the summer months due to outdoor activities.

There followed discussion regarding the one person per 50 sq. ft. calculation for the yoga studio, the current parking situation, and shared parking agreements with adjacent businesses. Borden stated that the ordinance does allow for shared parking arrangements if the Club wanted to incorporate that into their proposal to offset any deficiency.

LSL PRESENTATION ON STATUS OF NON-CONFORMING LOT STUDY WEST OF SOUTHFIELD ROAD

Planning consultant Robert Cramer, GIS expert from LSL Planning, used a PowerPoint presentation to provide an update on the nonconforming lot study west of Southfield Road. LSL is utilizing GIS data provided by Oakland County to map the project area and lot sizes, identify nonconforming lots, and work towards making informed recommendations and decisions in terms of modifying Zoning Ordinance regulations to minimize the number of nonconforming lots. Cramer will discuss the lot analysis and the next steps. Borden will come back in June or July with a list of alternatives and recommendations for Planning Board consideration and direction.

Cramer provided an overview of the issues west of Southfield Road. There are widely varying lot sizes with some fragmentation of the zoning districts primarily north of Beverly Road in the vicinity of Southfield Road. He will review the percentage of nonconforming lots in the priority areas today. Potential solutions for consideration will include: 1) Adjust standards in existing districts to increase compliance; 2) Upzone properties into districts where they comply; 3) Rezone to new districts “in between” existing districts. Cramer stated that the focus will be on changes with upzoning, which will correct a high percentage of the problem without introducing adjusted standards or new districts.

Cramer explained how GIS data is used to inventory conditions and project potential solutions. The GIS system can simulate how various adjustments will correct a nonconforming issue. He displayed a map, noting that everything that is colored is nonconforming based on lot area. Cramer identified two priority areas on the map. Priority A in the eastern third of the sub-area contains lots that are zoned R-1 for the most part. The area north of Beverly has 93% nonconformity. Priority B, between Lahser and Evergreen Roads, is primarily zoned R-A. This area contains smaller groups of nonconforming lots. The Board will decide whether or not to make changes.

The best solution will be identified by mapping non-conforming patterns of setbacks and lot areas; simulating impacts of solutions on level of compliance, and; recommending the most effective changes. LSL will be able to provide supporting data and detail to make these decisions.

Cramer displayed a map of each priority area indicating the number of parcels, current zoning designation(s), and the nonconforming lots in terms of side yard setback, lot area or lot width,

designated by color. He was able to change the view of the map to simulate the impact of upzoning the zoning district and show the percentage of nonconforming lots under different zoning districts. Cramer indicated the zoning change recommended by the planning consultants.

The concern was raised that upzoning could result in building out the side yard. The planners addressed a concern with reducing the standards to the point where there would be a concern about combining lots and building an extra house on the property. The maps showed that there were not many opportunities for this to occur. Borden added that, with respect to land division, the Village requires an averaging of the broader neighborhood, which would further limit the ability for a lot split. It was emphasized that every lot designated in red on the map would run into trouble if an expansion was proposed. All the lots have nonconforming situations. People who have had their lots upzoned will have an easier time expanding or remodeling their homes.

Motion by Liberty, second by Freedman, to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Motion passed.

David Jensen, Chair
Planning Board

Ellen E. Marshall
Village Clerk

Susan Bernard
Recording Secretary