

Village Manager Association of Oak Park

Participatory Planning

Public Comments

Monday, February 6, 2006

Delivered By Bob Kane, President of the VMA

We are glad to see that the Board is considering augmenting its public planning processes for input on Village owned properties that may be the subject of development or redevelopment. The Village Manager Association has consistently supported citizen input - particularly through our citizen Commissions - for many years. We urge you to utilize the talents and expertise of these citizen volunteers and to give their recommendations great weight.

While we fully support the open planning initiatives being undertaken tonight, we do have some concerns about the process that has been proposed. Our concerns stem from the following:

In the fall of 2005, a special meeting of the Board was conducted to discuss a development moratorium in Oak Park. The Board rightly declined such an extreme and potentially harmful measure. However, we believe that the seed was planted in the minds of the public at large and of area developers that Oak Park is anti-development. Unfortunately, following on the heels of the controversies surrounding WhiteCo. and the Superblock recommendations, the sentiment is not undeserved. Because of this, any additional public planning processes must be viewed as assisting or enhancing, rather than detracting from, the development process. Therefore we do not wish the processes you are discussing here tonight to be perceived in any way to hamper or impede the ability of Oak Park to attract developers who will propose attractive, appropriate and responsible development.

We all know that Oak Park needs to grow its tax base in order to support our excellent schools and parks as well as continue to provide the services that villagers have come to expect.

The procedures, as drafted, may appear to developers to result in a significant delay and thus discourage their interest. We are in a very competitive market with other communities - particularly to our immediate west - that are flexible and welcoming to development.

Please consider the following:

1. Adapt the participatory planning processes to take into account Districts where significant public input has already been collected through a Master

Planning process. There is no need to start the process over and, frankly, that would be a waste of taxpayer money.

2. Inform the public by providing in the process a time frame for all bodies - including staff and elected officials - to act promptly on soliciting and considering the public's input. In this way we can ensure that the process moves along timely and predictably, to the ultimate benefit of the citizens of the Oak Park.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our comments. We are providing a copy for your convenience.