

TOWN OF ITHACA PLANNING COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 18, 2018 4:30 p.m.

Committee Members: Rich DePaolo, Chair; Rod Howe and Pat Leary

Staff/Board Members Present: Bill Goodman, Sue Ritter, Chris Balestra, Bruce Bates, and Paulette Rosa

Persons to be Heard: None

Minutes: Approved as drafted.

Chain Works District Presentation:

Jaimie Gensel, Fagan Engineers

David West, Randall-West, Inc.

Mr. Gensel updated the committee on the Intermediate Remedial Mitigation Plan (IRMP) which the DEC has approved. Progress is being made and the last hurdle is the Record of Decision which should happen in the next 3-4 months. The Record of Decision that had been approved had been to industrial standards and Chainworks is pushing to go to residential standards. It has taken a while and that is why the project hasn't been in front of you a lot, but now we are getting closer and wanted to update the group.

Mr. West provided a slide presentation with an overview of the Chain Works District project. He explained that the plan going forward is to look at where new development/new neighborhoods can fit into the town portion of the property. The master plan provides a conceptual layout of where roads and buildings can fit, but the buildings themselves have not yet been designed. The parking lots are expected to stay where they are given the topography. The town/city municipal line goes through the middle of the property, in some cases through buildings, all of which complicates the process.

The PUD and PDZ processes are going through the respective processes now and a draft of the Town's PDZ was given out just prior to this meeting.

The PDZ breaks up the site into 6 different zones, including:

CW1 – Approximately 23 acres of the property to be kept natural and will connect to the Gateway Trail system.

CW2A – Intended mostly for townhouses, but would also allow small apartment buildings and duplexes.

CW2B – Intended for larger buildings and given that the land steps down from 96B, it is not as visible from the road. It has opportunities for taking advantage of views.

CW3A – Narrow strip along Route 96B that has been identified for townhouses.

CW3B – Composed mostly of existing parking lots, and is expected to remain so, and serve the parking needs of the entire development. The flat areas are too narrow to fit buildings in at this point. It is also expected to serve bus access.

CW4 – Industrial uses.

Mr. West turned to the PDZ draft and the Design Guidelines. The PDZ are the regulations, while the guidelines are intended to help the Planning Board ensure good architecture and the neighborhood feel the town wants for the project.

The guidelines would give the Planning Board the ability to enforce certain architectural elements and characteristics during site plan review. They would not be optional to the developer, but the Planning Board can choose to require them on a case-by-case basis. The PDZ is a form-based code that includes building types and contains the core standards (i.e. placement, windows, entryways, etc.), but the guidelines outlines those design features that can be more flexible.

Mr. West added that the Design Guidelines includes a description of the intended character for each subarea as a guide to the Planning Board in their evaluation of the buildings. Missing from the document are precedent images, which are still under discussion by staff and the project team on how the buildings should look. Other elements in the guidelines include roof pitches, façade materials, color/texture, and architectural variety, etc.

The committee was not given adequate time to really review the documents and instead will have comments and questions for the next meeting.

Mr. West and Mr. Gensel said they didn't expect comments now, but had wanted to get back on the towns radar.

Discussion will continue at the February meeting. Mr. DePaolo requested a redline copy if any changes are made.

In terms of process, the Town Board will need to prepare a findings statement on the GEIS prior to the PDZ being adopted. The Planning Board needs to adopt findings prior to granting site plan approval. At this point, Phase 1 of the project involves utilizing an existing building in the town, the manufacturing building. New construction in phase 1 is limited to the northern most point in the city (buildings 24 and 21).

Rental operating permit program implementation – review and discuss permit application form

The committee reviewed the draft application form and requested the following revisions:

- Application Title – add to the title “for less than 3 units”;
- Add question asking for the name of the property owner/business;
- Reorder questions #3 and #4 for more logical sequence;
- Change “mark only one oval” to “mark one”;
- Emergency contact - add “in the event of an emergency if the owner is not available”;
- Revisit the wording in the open-ended question #19.
- Question #4 change to “how many units will be rented”
- Add a question concerning the date of construction or conversion of ADU, if known;

Bruce and Lori will make the changes and bring the form to the next Town Board for final approval (due to the timeframe, the next Planning Committee meeting is after the program start date).

The Committee reviewed the additional materials in the application packet. The committee wanted that information to go out with the application, not with the operating permit, so people had the information right from the start. In terms of the inspection list, the committee requested that the list be simplified, with language put in more layman's terms and references to the NYS Building Code for those who want to get that deep into the details. A bullet point list would probably suffice for most people. The family definitions (stick figure drawing) will be improved and adapted into a graphical image.

Discuss potential legislation allowing duplexes in the High Density Residential Zone

The committee discussed the design toolbox handout for duplexes, including the good/bad duplex design examples, provided by staff.

Dan explained that the toolbox document is a compilation of regulatory approaches used by other municipalities that address the design and aesthetics of duplex developments. The approaches are separated into three major categories: building shape, materials/cladding, and windows/doors.

Rich asked about the roof pitch requirements of 6:12 or more, and its effect on affordability versus the desired aesthetics. Rich asked if we are asking for more than what would be required by a new single family home in the same area. Duplexes allow greater density which differentiates them from the single family building, or another idea is to require design elements for all new construction in the HDR zone.

Rich asked about the parking requirements and whether that means you can't park in front, on your own driveway; that needs to be clarified. He was also concerned about the paved driveway requirement which he thought was prohibitively expensive and gravel driveways are not necessarily bad if done correctly.

Rich thought some of the landscaping requirements were more than what was necessary to hide foundations.

Rich noted that this is a working draft and the committee will come back with more comments at the next meeting.

Sue added that at some point we need to ask Susan Brock, Attorney for the Town, to draft the legislation into a local law.

Next meeting:

February, 15, 2018; topics to include Chain Works District, duplex legislation, changes to the special use criteria.